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Monday, May 7, 2012

—

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, May 7, 2012

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayers

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

•(1105)

[English]

CANADA NATIONAL PARKS ACT

Mr. Gordon Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC) moved that Bill C-370, an act to amend the Canada National Parks Act (St. Lawrence Islands National Park of Canada), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to begin debate on the second reading of my private member's bill, Bill C-370, an act to amend the Canada National Parks Act (St. Lawrence Islands National Park of Canada).

In 1911, Canada led the world by establishing a national service dedicated to its parks. As it celebrated its 100th anniversary last year, Parks Canada advertised our famous national parks to draw attention to the parks and the park service and to attract visitors. Among those parks that we celebrated and advertised was St. Lawrence Islands National Park, most of which is located in my great riding of Leeds—Grenville.

Today I will briefly discuss the background and mandate of Parks Canada. I will describe the region in which St. Lawrence Islands National Park exists, explain the importance of visitors to my riding and discuss marketing and branding of this national park. This will lead to the natural conclusion that St. Lawrence Islands National Park should be renamed Thousand Islands national park, the subject of my bill.

My goal today is to present an overall snapshot of the issue in the limited time that I have at my disposal.

Parks Canada has several important roles in Canada. Working for the people of Canada, the agency protects and presents nationally significant examples of Canada's natural and cultural heritage. It helps foster public understanding, appreciation and enjoyment while at the time ensuring the integrity of these special places in Canada. Parks Canada's website explains that it is guardian, guide, partner and storyteller to the nation and the world about our national parks.

National parks themselves were, and are, established to protect and present outstanding representative examples of natural landscapes and natural phenomena that occur in Canada. These wild places, located in every province and territory, range from mountains and plains, to boreal forests and tundra, to lakes and glaciers, and much more. National parks protect the habitats, wildlife and ecosystem diversity representative of and sometimes unique to the natural regions.

St. Lawrence Islands National Park is located in an area of rich biodiversity. It consists of several ecologically important mainland properties and islands between Kingston and Brockville. The visitors' centre at Mallorytown Landing provides an introduction to the park, with hiking trail, interpretive programs, exhibits and family activities. The park is a partner in encouraging sustainable lifestyles and protecting the ecosystems of the Frontenac Arch Biosphere Reserve.

For those who are unaware, a biosphere reserve is identified by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNESCO, as an area that has an important natural and ecological value and is a place where people live, work and enjoy a variety of economic and recreational activities based on respect for the environment.

The concept of a biosphere reserve is that local communities, or representatives from key sectors such as agriculture, tourism, business, conservation and education, work together to develop projects that link conservation with economic development in their region. The committees are voluntary and community based, not connected to governmental or regulatory authorities. The Frontenac Arch Biosphere Reserve, which includes the St. Lawrence Islands National Park, was officially designated by UNESCO in 2002.

The St. Lawrence Islands National Park, which was established in 1904 as the first Canadian national park east of the Rocky Mountains, celebrated its centennial in 2004. The park is at a naturally occurring confluence of important geological formations and is also at a naturally occurring confluence of the cultural history of our nation.

I will read and paraphrase from the park's own information for a minute to provide a description of the park. It reads:

St. Lawrence Islands National Park is located in the heart of the 1000 Islands area, an 80-km wide extension of granite hilltops joining the Canadian Shield of northern Ontario with the Adirondack Mountains in New York State.

Glaciers retreated 10,000 years ago scraping sediments and exposing the rounded knobs of an ancient mountain chain. When the St. Lawrence River flooded the area on its path to the Atlantic Ocean, 1000 hilltops became the 1000 Islands.

Private Members' Business

Soil was slow to form over the acidic granite; today the area retains a rugged beauty. Plants and animals migrated to the area, encouraged by the moderating effects of the Great Lakes and the variety of micro-habitats which were created by the rugged topography. The islands form a land bridge from northwest to southeast across the St. Lawrence River, aiding movement of species through the area.

● (1110)

This narrow isthmus, known as the Frontenac Axis or Arch, is the vital link joining two important North American landforms—the Canadian Shield and the Adirondack Mountains—to form one contiguous ecosystem. Although the waters of the Great Lakes can be a barrier to migrating flora and fauna, the St. Lawrence funnels the water into a narrow channel and the islands form stepping stones, shortening distances between land masses.

The presence of the Great Lakes to the west has the effect of a 'heat sink' which moderates the climate in the area immediately surrounding the 1000 Islands. As a result, many plants and animals reach the limits of their range in the 1000 Islands.

The river also funnelled people coming from the Atlantic to the interior of North America through the islands. Native people, explorers and settlers have left their mark on the region and the islands. Enough native artifacts have been located to prompt a mandatory search every time waterfront is developed. Battles have taken place among the islands. Explorers and writers have marvelled at their beauty and mystery.

The French actually named the area les Mille-Îles, or the Thousand Islands, in the 1700s when French explorers travelled through the region. This was long before there were international boundaries. The islands themselves were named by the British navy.

The park began in 1904 with a small piece of waterfront property in Mallorytown Landing. Nine federally-owned islands in the St. Lawrence added to the attraction and recreational facilities were installed. Over the years, islands and land parcels were annexed.

Today the park contains more than 20 islands and about 90 islets scattered between Main Duck Island, which is located in Lake Ontario off Kingston and Brockville, Ontario. It includes mainland properties in Mallorytown Landing, Landon Bay, Jones Creek and Larue Mills Creek. Visitors come from all over the world to see the islands on one of the many boat tours of the region and visit the land-based facilities.

There are recreational opportunities of all kinds from bird watching to fishing to boating and swimming and so much more. Catering to visitors has become big business in my riding of Leeds—Grenville.

The latest statistics that are available from Statistics Canada indicate there are 438 enterprises that consider themselves visitor-based in my riding. These employ almost 6,000 people. Scattered throughout the riding but concentrated in the area closest to the Thousand Islands visitor services by any account is a very large employer in my riding.

I attended an event recently in Brockville that was celebrating the milestone in the construction of the Maritime Discovery Centre, a soon to be open tourist attraction that will concentrate its exhibits in the region. At that event, the mayor of Brockville, whose family business is printing, stated another interesting fact about how my riding was changing. He noted that as little as 10 years ago, the majority of printing he received, and he receives printing from both sides of the Canada-U.S. border, was industrial-based. Today, most of his work is visitor-based.

Visitation to the region and services for those visitors has always been important to my riding. It is becoming more important every year. If this were true only in my riding of Leeds—Grenville, all those business people in my riding would be pleased. However, this is not a situation that is unique to Leeds—Grenville. Visitor services have become a key ingredient from the economic development strategies of almost every community and region.

Knowing this, the folks involved in this industry in my riding are constantly seeking ways to make their products stand out. One way that this is accomplished is by what marketers call “branding”. Marketing associations define a brand as a name, a term, a sign, a symbol or design, or a combination of them intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of other sellers

How does this connect to a region or, in this case, a park? It is simple. It is important in this context that everyone works together throughout the region in this case to achieve a common goal.

While there are multiple facets to the technique of branding, I want to concentrate on one, the one that is addressed by my bill.

One of the most important aspects to branding is identification. Even today we identify objects with a familiar brand name. The quickest one that comes to mind is tissue paper and Kleenex. Good branding delivers a message clearly, confirms credibility and connects the market with the object. A solid brand lives in the hearts and minds of customers, clients and prospects. It speaks to their experiences and perceptions. Branding is a quest for a solid, long-lasting and easily identifiable name.

● (1115)

There is a name that people use to quickly and easily identify the area where the St. Lawrence Islands National Park is located and that name is the Thousand Islands. Parks Canada itself and the information about the park that it uses on its website, the information I read a few minutes ago, identifies the location of the park in the Thousand Islands.

As they watched the 100th anniversary advertisement for the St. Lawrence Islands National Park, those involved in visitor services in my riding were left with one observation: The name of this park does not define where it is located. The St. Lawrence River is a very long river. How does the current name of the park define where it is located?

In naming national parks, national marine conservation areas and national historic sites or geographical features in a park or site, Parks Canada follows the general principle of the Geographic Names Board of Canada. However, there is no historical record about how and why St. Lawrence Islands National Park acquired its name.

The general procedure to propose a new name or change a name states that a federal authority would generally investigate a name by consulting the residents of the area, historical documents, files and other sources.

Private Members' Business

When I began working on this issue, which was brought to me from many of my constituents, I consulted with business owners and members of the municipal councils throughout the region. Some were actually surprised that the park was not already named Thousand Islands National Park because they had been referring to it by that name for many years.

If we were to conduct an Internet search for St. Lawrence Islands, we would find very little information. If we were to conduct a similar search for Thousand Islands, we would find a great deal of information all tied to the region where the park is located. This is an indication that the Thousand Islands name is the one that is popularly used to describe the region and the place where the park is located.

Compounding the current name problem for the national park is the fact that the Ontario government operates an agency called Parks of the St. Lawrence. This agency operates properties along the entire length of the Ontario portion of the St. Lawrence River from Kingston to the Quebec border. It includes things such as Fort Henry, Upper Canada Village, parks and campgrounds all along the St. Lawrence in eastern Ontario. In fact, I used to be the chair of that agency and there was often confusion. Even when people are aware that they are searching for a national park with the St. Lawrence in its name, they can become confused with the Ontario government agency.

Parks Canada has as one of its roles the responsibility for the presentation of our national parks. St. Lawrence Islands National Park is located in what is popularly known as the Thousand Islands. It is comprised of some of these islands. Visitor services are growing and are an important part of the economic development of the region that encompasses this park.

A simple marketing theory demands that the park be easily identified in its location on the lengthy St. Lawrence River.

For all of those reasons, I encourage my colleagues to support my private member's bill to rename the St. Lawrence Islands National Park to the Thousand Islands national park of Canada.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan (Scarborough—Rouge River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am wondering about the costs associated with the adoption of this bill. I wonder if the member has had his private member's bill costed out and, if so, what would be the cost?

It seems to me that changing the name of a 108-year-old national park would have a number of costs associated with it. As the member pointed out, the cost of re-branding is the marketing costs, such as signage, brochures, website redesign, et cetera.

Does the member have any idea what the costs associated with this re-branding would be?

Mr. Gordon Brown: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Scarborough—Rouge River for her excellent question and one that, in fact, I had asked.

There would be a minimal cost of somewhere around \$100,000 over a 10 year period. Basically, the signs are already in place and therefore would be covered. Changes to the website and brochures are ongoing costs. The actual cost of this change is very small but the benefits would be great.

● (1120)

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am looking forward to speaking to the bill later.

I want to invite my hon. colleague from Leeds—Grenville to talk about the kinds of benefits that can be expected from tourism as a result of the bill. Perhaps he might like to talk about the great attractions for tourists in the riding of Leeds—Grenville.

Mr. Gordon Brown: Mr. Speaker, part of this park is located in the member's riding, just off Fort Henry.

My colleague knows how important tourism is to Kingston and the Thousand Islands. There are many attractions in Kingston; I talked a bit about Fort Henry. In fact, I chaired the agency that operates Fort Henry. Fort Henry is owned by the federal government, and I am proud that this government has poured millions of dollars into restoring it, and the member for Kingston and the Islands is happy about that as well, because it was not that many years ago that Fort Henry was crumbling. Its future was bleak, but this government has ensured that Fort Henry will be sustainable for the long run.

Mr. Chris Alexander (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, obviously we are all grateful for this excellent piece of legislation from the member for Leeds—Grenville.

In answer to the question put forward by our colleague opposite from Scarborough—Rouge River about costs, the member could have said that the cost of making this change would be a lot less than creating a new park in the Rouge Valley, a park that she and many of us on this side of the House welcome.

The member speaks with such authority about the economy depending on this park. Could he tell us what it would mean for the economy of Leeds—Grenville? Could he tell us what it would mean for the tourism sector in Leeds—Grenville? What will changes like branding mean as we go into the bicentennial of the War of 1812, which also played an important role in his region?

Mr. Gordon Brown: Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary is familiar with the Thousand Islands region, having gone to school there.

His question had to do with the importance of tourism. I spoke about 6,000 jobs in my riding alone, and I am sure the member for Kingston and the Islands has at least that many as well.

My colleague mentioned the War of 1812, and the first skirmish in the War of 1812 happened in my hometown of Gananoque in September. June 18, 1812, was the day war was declared by the United States on Great Britain. On June 18, 2012, a big event is going to be held to commemorate the start of that war. This year many events are going to be held along the St. Lawrence and in the Thousand Islands region to commemorate the War of 1812 as we welcome visitors from the United States as well as celebrate our Canadian heritage.

Private Members' Business

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan (Scarborough—Rouge River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to join the debate on Bill C-370, an act to amend the Canada National Parks Act (St. Lawrence Islands National Park of Canada). This is a very interesting bill, as it proposes to change the name of a Canadian national park from “St. Lawrence Islands National Park” to “Thousand Islands National Park”.

I would first like to talk a bit about the background of this national park. The St. Lawrence Islands National Park is located in the Thousand Islands region of the St. Lawrence River. This is a particularly special region, as it connects the Canadian Shield from Algonquin Park to the Adirondack Mountains. The park consists of 21 islands plus many smaller islets, and is Canada's third-smallest national park, with a total area of 24.4 square kilometres.

The park is located within the Frontenac Arch Biosphere Reserve, which is known as one of the areas with the highest biodiversity in Canada. The Frontenac Arch Biosphere was designated by UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere program in November of 2002. It was designated as such for its unique flora and fauna, as the area contains a vast diversity of plant and animal life. There are many species at risk in the region, totalling 34 for both plants and animals. It is a beautiful region of our country and is one of the most diverse areas in Canada. It really is a phenomenal place to visit.

The region also has a vast history. Originally it was inhabited, like much of our beautiful nation, by aboriginal peoples; the first people of this area were actually the Iroquois, to be exact. The 17th century saw the arrival of many French explorers, fur traders and missionaries to the area as they followed the St. Lawrence River to seek their fortune in this new world. European settlers began moving into the area during the American Revolution. During the War of 1812, the park area was visited by both British and American warships. Actually, the hull of a British gunboat that was sunk in the area was raised in 1967; it was preserved and now resides in this park.

The park is also home to Cathcart Tower, one of the Martello towers that were built in the 1840s to defend the British from American invasion. The tower is also a UNESCO world heritage site.

In 1904 the area was established as St. Lawrence Islands National Park. It was the first national park established in Canada east of the Rocky Mountains. The history of this area, coupled with the fact that this park is the oldest national park east of the Rocky Mountains, makes it a remarkable part of our Canadian history and heritage, something I know all members of the House are interested in preserving and protecting.

My hon. colleague who introduced this bill sits as a member with me on the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, and he and the other members of his caucus who sit on that committee are constantly reiterating the importance of protecting our national heritage and history. With this in mind, I am very confused as to why he would want to change the name of such a historical and well-established national park. I feel that changing the name of this park is unnecessary and unwarranted. This park has been in existence for 108 years and is well established. Considering the cuts recently delivered to Parks Canada by the Conservative government, I also

feel it is unfair for that same government to then legislate that Parks Canada spend some of its already tight budget on the costs associated with this unnecessary name change.

There are costs associated with changing signage, brochures, websites and generally rebranding the park. The rebranding of this park would be no small feat. The people in my riding of Scarborough—Rouge River have been calling for years for the creation of Rouge national park; the throne speech last summer announced the government's intent to create the people's park, yet this past budget did nothing but re-announce the same promise. There was no funding committed to the creation of the park, no outline or timeframe announced for the establishment of the park, nothing other than the same promise.

• (1125)

Instead, Parks Canada was dealt a total funding cut of \$29.2 million by 2015, 638 jobs were declared as surplus at Parks Canada and an additional 1,689 jobs will be affected in some way between now and 2015, either through shortened hours, being deemed seasonal or just cut altogether. Of these cuts, 396 are located right here in Ontario.

The government is asking Parks Canada to dedicate valuable time and resources to renaming and rebranding a park that is 108 years old. It seems slightly unfair and impractical. Meanwhile, we hear that it will take up to 10 years until the creation of Rouge national park gets under way, a promise that the government made now one year ago.

Moreover, the negligible and unproven economic benefit of the bill in relation to tourism would be vastly outweighed by the negative regional economic impacts of shutting down the Kingston Penitentiary and throwing more than 460 people out of work in the region.

Canadians in my riding and across the country are suffering. People are unemployed and underemployed. They are having trouble putting food on the table and making ends meet. Seniors, many of whom are unfortunately already living in poverty, are being forced to work two years longer. First nations across the country are living in extreme forms of poverty and sub-par conditions.

Public service jobs have been slashed by at least 19,200 positions. Provinces are losing \$31 billion in health transfers owing to a unilateral funding structure change made by the government. Students and their families are being straddled with enormous student debt. Approximately 280,000 federal skilled worker immigrant applications from people who applied prior to February 27, 2008, are being closed and refunded. The eco-energy retrofit program, which has been widely popular in this country, serving 250,000 households, is being terminated. This will cause a loss of 70,000 person-hours of work and \$520 million in federal tax revenue.

I could keep going on, because this list continues. The government does not have its priorities straight. It cannot cut funding to Parks Canada in the budget and then saddle it with the costs of making an unnecessary change to the name of an already well-established national park.

Private Members' Business

The government needs to start focusing on the things that matter to Canadians: job creation and access to the services they rely. This bill is yet one more example of how out of touch the government really is with Canadians.

• (1130)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to rise this morning and speak to Bill C-370 introduced by my hon. colleague, the member for Leeds—Grenville.

When I spoke with park experts, they said several times that he was a good friend of St. Lawrence Islands National Park. I want to commend him for that.

[*English*]

I would just like to respond to the previous speaker by saying that this is actually a private member's bill and not a government bill. I know that Parks Canada is struggling with budget cuts, and I know that this particular park is struggling with budget cuts and having to lay off people. This is not a government bill, and I do not want to hold my hon. colleague responsible for these things. I have been told several times that the member is a very good friend of St. Lawrence Islands National Park and the Frontenac Arch Biosphere Reserve.

This is the smallest national park in Canada. It is the oldest national park east of the Rockies.

[*Translation*]

The park was created in 1904.

[*English*]

Some of the park is in the great riding of Kingston and the Islands. It includes Cedar Island, which is just off Cartwright Point in Kingston and the Islands. On this island is Cathcart Tower, one of four Martello towers that guard the entrance to the harbour in Kingston and that were constructed during the 19th century. This park has a lot of history.

The park stretches from just south of Kingston and the Islands, south of Kingston to Mallorytown, comprising about 20 larger islands, a series of islets and a number of inland properties. Geologically, it is composed of old granite mountaintops in an old hilly strip connecting the Canadian Shield to the Adirondack Mountains.

It is an important part of our history. It was settled by aboriginal peoples at the beginning of the Holocene epoch, the epoch that we are now exiting. It was settled about 10,000 years ago because it was a great place to fish and hunt. Wild turkeys still live there. Those wild turkeys were probably the origin of a wild turkey that settled on my mother's backyard porch in the middle of the city of Kingston. It is a very strange thing to imagine in the middle of the city of Kingston. That just points to the biodiversity in the area.

This area was settled by European settlers, especially United Empire Loyalists fleeing the American Revolution. In the early 20th century, this area became a getaway for the rich and famous in North America. A lot of the buildings, the elegant houses and the summer cottages are great sights seen on the various boat cruises of tourist

attractions in the region. They are a large and important part of the local economy.

I want to go back to talk about the importance of the area as a reserve of biodiversity. This park is part of the Frontenac Arch Biosphere Reserve, an official United Nations biosphere reserve. The function of the park is to help preserve that biodiversity and to make it available to people, especially to students. The history and the biodiversity are two reasons why this is such an important park for the region and for the country. That is why it is a national park.

I want to talk now about the Thousand Islands region. This is a region that consists of 1,864 islands on the western end of the St. Lawrence Seaway, right in the region of the park.

• (1135)

My personal experience with the Thousand Islands began in my youth. When our family travelled on summer vacations, we would all get in the car and travel around North America. When my parents wanted to explain to people in some other part of North America where we lived, they would just say, "It's near the Thousand Islands". People always understood what that meant, or at least had heard of the Thousand Islands.

More recently, after being elected to this seat, a lot of the news media in Toronto who wanted to interview me kept referring to my riding as "Kingston and the Thousand Islands". So the word "thousand islands" is really stuck in people's minds. It is already a brand associated with the region and with tourism. It brings tourists to the region and is very important for our local economy. I want to thank my colleague, the hon. member for Leeds—Grenville, for putting forward this bill. The idea of changing the name of this park to Thousand Islands National Park is something for which there has been a lot of community consultation. People have thought about this for quite awhile and there is a consensus that this would be a good thing to do. The name is recognized by tourists from all over the world. Nowadays, there are a lot of tourist buses on highway 401. We want them to stop and visit our region and enjoy what it has to offer. It is a very important part of our region's economy and provides a lot of jobs.

There are other reasons for renaming this park. As my hon. colleague has mentioned, the St. Lawrence River goes from Kingston all the way to Quebec and beyond. The St. Lawrence Islands National Park stretches from Kingston to Mallorytown so it really is centred around the Thousand Islands region. We do not want to confuse it with the whole of the St. Lawrence River and all the other islands that are in the St. Lawrence River from Kingston all the way to Quebec City. We also want to distinguish this particular national park from the phrase "parks of the St. Lawrence", which is used by the Province of Ontario to describe a number of other attractions in the area, for example, Fort Henry which everybody should visit the first chance they get.

Private Members' Business

I would like to conclude by saying that this has been thought through by the community. This is not rebranding. It is attaching the name of this park to a brand that is very old and well-known throughout the world and something that people naturally talk about when they talk about the region. It would be very important for the economy of the region to attach this park to the brand so that more tourists come and visit. Finally, I would say that the St. Lawrence National Park is struggling with the government's recent cuts to Parks Canada. We will be struggling to protect biodiversity and to pass on the history of the region. I think that the member for Leeds—Grenville and I will be working to mitigate some of the effects of these cuts on what I hope will soon be known as the Thousands Islands National Park of Canada.

• (1140)

Mr. Royal Galipeau (Ottawa—Orléans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure today to speak in support of my hon. friend from Leeds—Grenville and his private member's bill, An Act to amend the Canada National Parks Act (St. Lawrence Islands National Park of Canada). My time is short and I will discuss tourism and visitors' services as it relates to the park at the centre of this bill.

One of the key economic challenges facing Canada is tourism and how we can take advantage of the growing market for international tourism.

[Translation]

It is no secret that between 2000 and 2009, Canada dropped from 8th to 15th place in the ranking of international tourist destinations.

[English]

That is why last year this government released a federal tourism strategy titled “Welcoming the World”. That document recognizes that millions of people from around the world come to Canada each year to see the country and participate in Canadian experiences.

[Translation]

The tourism and visitor services industry supports thousands of jobs all across the country and could keep on growing in the future.

[English]

We have a lot to offer visitors in this industry that continues to show resilience even through the recent tough economic times. The tourism strategy announced last year takes what is called a whole-of-government approach. Every department that touches on the tourism industry reviews its impact on the industry. In 2010, tourism was responsible for \$73.4 billion in revenues in Canada which represented about 2% of Canada's overall gross domestic product. According to the tourism strategy, that is as much as the combined GDP of the agriculture, forestry and fishing sectors.

[Translation]

Nearly 600,000 jobs are related to visitor services in Canada.

[English]

It is important to note too that tourism drives some of our major service industries, such as accommodations, food and beverage, passenger transport, recreation and entertainment.

[Translation]

These industries account for 9% of Canada's total employment.

[English]

International tourism brought \$14.9 billion into our economy in 2010, making it an important source of export revenue. Tourism represents about 23% of Canada's international trade in services, making it Canada's second largest service export behind commercial services. Tourism, especially international tourism, supplies more than economic benefits to Canada. It allows us to share our heritage with the world while at the same time forging links, promoting understanding and encouraging respect for the natural environment.

[Translation]

When we talk about tourism in Canada, we are talking about small business. Small business owners are the backbone of our tourism industry.

[English]

About 98% of Canada's tourism sector is made up of small and medium-sized businesses, such as boat tour operators, campground owners and marina operators.

[Translation]

Tourism is a many-faceted sector driven by small business.

[English]

All of these businesses and organizations, especially in individual regions of our country, work together toward a common goal, offering visitor experiences and products that are second to none.

Tourism, especially international tourism, is a growth industry that will continue to impact on Canada's economic recovery. Over the past 20 years, international tourism arrivals to Canada have been increasing on average 4% per year. Travellers are arriving from new countries and new regions all the time. The middle classes of many of the world's emerging economies are finding Canada an attractive place to visit. By 2020, the United Nations World Tourism Organization estimates that international tourist visits will reach 1.6 billion, double what the number was in 2009. While Canada has steadily dropped on the list of preferred destinations, as have other mature markets, it is still among the top destinations for visitors.

• (1145)

[Translation]

Nevertheless, between 2000 and 2010, Canada's share of total international arrivals declined from 2.9% to 1.7%.

Private Members' Business

[English]

When we study what travellers want in a destination, the Thousand Islands region and St. Lawrence Islands National Park provide plenty of answers. More often, international visitors are turning to the Internet and social media tools to research destinations. They look for identity. The global market is crowded with destinations and tourism brands. A recognizable brand, for example a name, is increasingly important, not only for the country, but for the area where the St. Lawrence Islands National Park is located.

I have been speaking about our national tourism strategy for the past few minutes. Let me now bring the discussion closer to the park and the region in question.

[Translation]

The St. Lawrence was discovered by Jacques Cartier 477 years ago, on August 10, 1535. Many storied explorers travelled its waters, including Champlain, de Courcelle, Count Frontenac and Cavelier de La Salle. The first reliable geographic maps of the region were drawn by Jean Deshayes, hydrographer to King Louis XIV himself, who named it “les Mille-Îles” or the Thousand Islands in 1687.

[English]

Ever since the Thousand Islands region became a tourist destination, in the late 1800s, people have come from around the world to visit.

[Translation]

My parents spent their honeymoon in the picturesque Thousand Islands in August 1944, and we go back there every year.

[English]

There are in fact 1,865 islands. Tourism is increasingly important as the economic mix of the area has changed from manufacturing to services. The latest numbers from Statistics Canada indicate that there are 438 enterprises that consider themselves visitor-based in the area, and these employ almost 6,000 people.

[Translation]

And that number is rising steadily.

[English]

The Thousand Islands have been on the map for 325 years. Our colleague for Leeds—Grenville keeps them on the map, especially in his work as chair of the Canada-United States Inter-Parliamentary Group.

Further, the government has been supportive of this economic change in many ways, as we support improvements to national parks and historic sites in the area and participate in the development of new attractions in the region.

Within a few miles of this national park lie such treasures as Fort Henry, the Rideau Canal, Fort Wellington and historic mills and battle grounds from the war of 1812 and the Hunters raids of 1838.

For the region to continue to take advantage of Canada's push for international travellers and for its own marketing of the region, the

St. Lawrence Islands National Park must be promoted as the Thousand Islands National Park.

Part of the federal tourism strategy is developing what is called a signature experiences collection. These are experiences that are unique and offer something special to the visitor.

● (1150)

[Translation]

Tourism operators in the Thousand Islands are starting to become familiar with this initiative, and in fact the Thousand Islands are already on the list. Parks Canada's mandate consists in part in presenting nationally significant examples of Canada's natural and cultural heritage and fostering public understanding, appreciation and enjoyment.

[English]

Since more international travellers are using resources such as the Internet to research their travel destination and to plan their activities, it only makes sense that this park should properly align itself with the Thousand Islands brand. A quick Internet search for Thousand Islands will show the need to accomplish this. The easiest and best way to do this is to change its name to Thousand Islands National Park, so that it would be found among the other attractions of the region.

[Translation]

The future of the park, like the future of Canada and the Thousand Islands region, is bright, and it will be even brighter once the park's name has been changed.

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleagues for their speeches about Bill C-370, An Act to amend the Canada National Parks Act (St. Lawrence Islands National Park of Canada).

I would also like to thank my hon. colleague from Ottawa—Orléans, who just spoke. I would urge him to take full advantage of the data from Statistics Canada, which still has enough statistics to quote. Cuts are imminent there, and more jobs will be lost. So I urge him to pay close attention to the statistics that are available because, unfortunately, that opportunity will soon be gone, which is a real shame. I would note in passing that the government is cutting 728 jobs at Statistics Canada. I know that is not what we are talking about right now, but I thought it was worth mentioning.

Statistics Canada is not the only organization that will be losing jobs. I hope that if my hon. Conservative colleague, who spoke and who introduced that wonderful bill, really cares about Canada's parks, he will remember that Bill C-38, the budget implementation bill, calls for 1,600 fewer jobs at Parks Canada. So if he really wants to do something to help Parks Canada, I suggest he begin by voting against the budget, which leaves so much to be desired in terms of improving Canada's parks. Unfortunately, his bill will not help Parks Canada at all.

Private Members' Business

My hon. colleagues also talked about other Canadian parks, including the Rideau Canal, one of the longest skating rinks in the world, if not the longest. There will be jobs cut there too. Unbelievably, there will also be job losses at the Fortress of Louisbourg in Nova Scotia, the Chambly Canal in Quebec, and Banff National Park.

What impact will this have? My hon. colleague's bill does absolutely nothing to promote greater diversity of parks, better conservation or greater accessibility to our parks. On the contrary, the next budget will completely undermine the modest efforts the member is trying to make. Changing the name will do nothing to ensure greater accessibility.

It is important to understand that job losses will lead to a shorter tourist season. Furthermore, service will be worse and wait times for the locks will be longer and longer, which will harm tourism. The Conservatives are always boasting about being the champions of the economy, but this time, they are attacking tourism directly, which will be very bad for our economy.

By cutting jobs, the Conservatives are hurting our economy. Job losses at Parks Canada are a disgrace and will definitely affect our tourism industry. The Conservatives are killing the tourism industry and they should be ashamed of themselves. It truly pains me to say this.

The bill introduced by our Conservative colleague will unfortunately not help Parks Canada in any way.

I am a member of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development. The members of that committee are currently in the process of examining a national conservation plan. Everyone knows that Canadian parks promote national conservation and biodiversity. Furthermore, I can tell you that we currently have international targets and we have signed an international agreement aimed at conserving 17% of our land area and 10% of our marine area by 2020.

I can hear you, from your chair, Mr. Speaker, asking me what our current targets are and what goals have been reached so far.

• (1155)

All the Canadians and Conservatives watching us are wondering the same thing.

In fact, only 1% of our marine area and only 10% of our land area are currently protected. A lot more work needs to be done before we can start changing the name of a park. A lot more work needs to be done to conserve our biodiversity.

Bill C-38 contains a lot of legislation. I would call it a mammoth bill. It is not right. They have put everything into that bill and, unfortunately, we will not be able to review all these pieces of legislation in the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, as my colleagues already know. The bill also amends the Fisheries Act, which deals with fish habitat. Parks and habitat protection are truly essential for conserving our biodiversity.

I will read something interesting that I am sure my colleagues will be very surprised to learn. The year 2010 was declared the

International Year of Biodiversity. It is important to take care of our biodiversity. I am quite concerned about biodiversity because it has an impact not only the conservation of various species, but also on our food supply. Species conservation matters to our health as well. It is truly important to have good biodiversity.

My colleagues may not know it, but human beings are one of the species at risk. We have a great deal of work to do when it comes to preserving biodiversity. I will also speak briefly about the priority given by this bill to changing the name of a park. There are a number of much more urgent priorities, such as climate change. There is nothing in the budget about global warming. On the contrary, global warming in Canada will rise exponentially and with catastrophic results.

One of the impacts of global warming is that one-fifth of the world's species face the threat of extinction, including human beings.

I will quote the executive secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity:

Each increase of one degree Celsius in average global surface temperature resulted in the loss of about 10 percent of all known animal and plant species. Climate change contributes to the reduction of biodiversity.

The article goes on to say:

Climate change does not threaten man [I prefer to say the human species] alone. It poses a real risk to biodiversity as well. In relation to the Copenhagen summit, the executive secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity announced that one-fifth of all flora and fauna face the threat of extinction if nothing is done to limit global warming.

As I mentioned, my honourable colleague's bill will do nothing at present for Canada's parks, quite the contrary. We have seen all the cuts that are being made. His bill will do nothing to preserve biodiversity or to fight climate change.

I am convinced that my hon. colleague supports Canada's parks, biodiversity and the richness of our land and marine areas. That is why I am urging him to vote against Bill C-38 to implement certain provisions of the budget, rather than bringing forward his bill. The budget implementation bill is the real danger. It is truly harmful and dangerous, because passing such a bill will result in the loss of 1,600 jobs at Parks Canada. My hon. colleague should vote against his party's budget rather than bringing forward this bill.

• (1200)

[*English*]

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise today to support my colleague from Leeds—Grenville and his private member's bill, Bill C-370, an act to amend the Canada National Parks Act (St. Lawrence Islands National Park of Canada). I will spend my time today providing more detail on the history of the St. Lawrence Islands National Park.

The member for Leeds—Grenville has already provided a brief background on the discovery and naming of the Thousand Islands. The French were the first Europeans to travel the waters of the St. Lawrence and mark places for future travellers to stop and rest by planting poplar trees along the banks. According to records left by the French in the early 1600s when they arrived, natives were already living in the Thousand Islands region year round, growing corn and other crops and catching fish and game.

Government Orders

Archeological finds indicate that between 700 B.C., about the time Rome was founded, and 1600 when the French arrived, there was a great deal of activity around the Thousand Islands region, although the earliest records indicate that there were people there as early as 7,000 years ago.

Natives originally came to the water in the summer to catch fish and hunt using bows and arrows. Later, they settled in the area and practised agriculture. It was these native settlers, the St. Lawrence Iroquois, who Jacques Cartier met at Hochelaga in 1535. The French called the islands les Milles-Îles and, depending on current relationships with the natives, described voyages through the islands as safe, mildly exciting or very dangerous.

It was a British Royal Navy captain who was responsible for naming the islands in the early 1800s. He divided the islands into groups, the Admiralty, Lake Fleet, Brock and Navy Fleet, and then gave them names based on their grouping. For example, the Lake Fleet group islands are named after warships, while the Navy group islands are named after naval officers.

The period from the mid-1860s to the establishment of the park in 1904 saw a marked change in North American society. After the American Civil War, which ended in 1865, people moved in great numbers from the country to the city. Wages increased and the work week shortened to six and even five and a half days. The wilderness was opening up, thanks to steam engines and railways, and railway companies were being established everywhere.

George Pullman of Pullman car fame knew just the place to locate his railroad, right in the heart of the Thousand Islands. He began bringing the new American city dwellers with extra spending money to the Thousand Islands area. He was not the first to recognize the attraction of the Thousand Islands, but he was the pioneer who brought the first real crowds to the islands in his fancy new Pullman cars. By the early 1870s so many were coming to the islands that the islands themselves became attractive real estate. Citizens of Prescott, Brockville and Gananoque, as well as those in villages in between, became alarmed. Islands they had hunted, fished, farmed and picnicked for generations were quickly disappearing behind no trespassing signs.

In 1874 their concerns led to two petitions being sent to the governor general of Canada. They both read in part:

—[your petitioners] are afraid that if the islands are sold the timber now growing on them will be destroyed, their beauty spoiled and the source of health and recreation they now afford to the public will be utterly destroyed.

The reply was not encouraging. At the time, the federal government held the Canadian islands in trust for the native people who had ceded them to Canada. They were to be sold and the money used to benefit the natives, but the pressure from local residents continued.

In 1877 the idea of preserving some of the islands gained a new champion in Thaddeus Leavitt, the editor of the Brockville *Recorder & Times*, and a great historian of today.

It is very evident from the speeches today that the residents of the area clearly believe that the name should be the Thousand Islands national park. As the member for Leeds—Grenville indicated, many people, including parks people, refer to it by that name and the

people and municipal governments surveyed in preparation for this bill all agreed the name should be changed.

I am pleased to support the member for Leeds—Grenville in his attempts to rectify this historic misstep and change the name of St. Lawrence Islands National Park to Thousand Islands national park.

• (1205)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the order paper.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

JOBS, GROWTH AND LONG-TERM PROSPERITY ACT

The House resumed from May 4 consideration of the motion that Bill C-38, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 29, 2012 and other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton—Leduc, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure today to rise to speak to Bill C-38, the budget implementation act. Before I get to the specifics of the budget, I want to give an overall view of the budgetary plan that we have been on for a number of years and leading into 2012.

We did two years of stimulus spending in 2009-10. Now we are on a path toward eliminating the deficit over the medium term through our deficit reduction action plan. While doing so, we are continuing our transfers to the provinces and to persons.

We have taken a path to ensure that social programs are sustainable in our country, in part by ensuring that elderly and family benefits continue, but also in terms of ensuring that health, education and social services, with our transfers to the provinces, continue on as well. With transfers to the provinces, we have been funding at 6% year over year, and that will continue for another number of years and then it will proceed at nominal GDP with a base of 3%, which is responsible funding for health care going forward.

At the same time, we will continue our funding at 3% for the Canada social transfer, year over year funding, which funds education and social services of the provinces, so provinces can plan long term in how they want to fund health care, education and social services.

Government Orders

I also point out that we are continuing our long-term plan with respect to taxation, a plan that began in the fall of 2007 with the fall fiscal update by the Minister of Finance, in terms of reducing our business tax rate to 15% federally, encouraging provinces to move to a 10% business tax rate, then moving to a small business tax rate of 11% from 12% and increasing the amount that companies can earn and still pay that lower rate of tax at 11%. They used to be able to earn \$300,000 of business income and now they can earn \$500,000 of business income.

It is important to point this out that we have had some very long-term strategies in place in lowering taxes, making Canada more competitive, drawing investment back to the country and moving toward a balanced budget over the medium term, something that has been recognized by international organizations as the right path.

I will focus my speech on the issue of innovation. Going back to the release of the science and technology strategy in the spring of 2007 by the government, we are trying to focus our research efforts in four main priority areas and also by investing in research and development, science, technology and innovation.

If we look at the investments we have made over the past number of years, these have been recognized by university and industry leaders across the country, and that is an important point. Many people will say that these are simply austerity times, that we have had our stimulus spending and now we are in austerity times, and that is not correct. We are looking for efficiencies through our deficit reduction action plan, but at the same time we are continuing to invest in innovation.

I will quote at length from a letter from the president of the University of Alberta, Indira Samarasekera, a very distinguished individual. We are very lucky to have her in Edmonton because she is an outstanding person. She says she would like to thank our government for:

—your outstanding support for advanced research in science, technology, and education and training in Budget 2012....Budget 2012 reaffirms the Government of Canada's commitment to post-secondary education and research while further encouraging innovation in the private sector.

As Budget 2012 outlines, innovation is integral to competitiveness in the global knowledge economy. While Canada is a world leader in many advanced research fields, forming stronger linkages between public and private stakeholders will yield important dividends for both sectors. The provision of \$37 million to the granting councils to form industry, academic-partnerships is thus very timely. An additional \$500 million in funding for the Canada Foundation of Innovation will also ensure that Canada's research infrastructure, which is an important element in attracting talent from around the world, remains state-of-the-art and world-class. By doubling the industrial Research and Development Internship Program, more talented graduate students will gain valuable experience in and exposure to the practices of the private sector.

Given the economic restraint occurring around the globe, Canada is fortunate to have strong economic fundamentals. Budget 2012 reinforces these advantages by recognizing the important role innovation plays in Canada's long-term economic prosperity. The investments included in Budget 2012 provide Canadian entrepreneurs and innovators with access to the resources they need to create jobs, make ground-breaking discoveries and form important linkages around the world.

• (1210)

It is important to note what one of our most distinguished university leaders has to say in terms of continuing to invest in innovation, research and development.

Also, the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada warmly welcome budget 2012, as did Polytechnics Canada. I will quote from its press release:

Specifically, we welcome:

the doubling of funding for the Industrial Research Assistance Program (IRAP), which benefits many of our small and mid-size company partners.

This was one of the things that was identified in the Jenkins report. Frankly, need to double this program has been identified by many small and medium-sized businesses across the country. This program is very effective in providing not only financial assistance but mentorship to these small and medium-sized companies that are growing in Canada, which is one of our main challenges.

One of our main challenges is that a lot of our smaller companies have some real challenges in growing into larger companies, or as they grow into larger companies and increase their sales and net volume, they experience some challenges. A CEO said to me recently that with a one million dollar company he could operate fairly well, but when sales increased to \$7 million, he had some real challenges. In fact, the IRAP program mentored him through that transition.

I will continue with the press release from Polytechnics Canada, which states:

additional funding for the Strategy for Partnerships and Innovation—a key plank for the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council's...industry-facing programs; and

the new multi-year funding for the Canada Foundation for Innovation with its explicit intention to continue the very recent College-Industry Innovation Fund.

This is an important point of which many Canadians should be very proud. If we look at the early or mid-1990s, there was a real problem in Canada that we called the brain drain. Many people, scientists and researchers, left Canada to go to the United States or other countries because they felt they had better opportunities abroad. In fact, I think that has been reversed and I would credit the previous government in part for a lot of the initiatives during the mid-1990s and on, like the Canada Foundation for Innovation, which has been expanded and extended by our government with enhanced funding.

We have introduced a number of new programs in terms of research and development and continue to fund basic research through the granting councils. We are also focusing on the main challenge we have in this area, which is commercialization, to ensure that our small businesses can grow into larger businesses and continue to compete. That is why we set up the Jenkins report. I want to thank Mr. Jenkins for his panel's report and the important work in this area. We are continuing to invest in innovation.

The other area I want to point out is in respect to labour challenges. Whenever I do round tables in my riding of Edmonton—Leduc, the number one issue I hear from businesses is access to labour, skilled and unskilled people. I would love to have members come to my riding to do round tables. I would ask around the table how many people would be needed today and one business person might say that he or she needed 75 people or 125 people today of all types, skilled and unskilled.

This was a crisis about four or five years ago in Alberta and western Canada as well as in parts of Atlantic Canada. In Newfoundland, it is getting to be a serious situation in the lack of labour. This is why we have made a number of changes.

The Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development was in my riding in Nisku recently to announce changes to the temporary foreign worker program. It was an excellent announcement in terms of addressing some of the issues. However, we have to address both the immigration side and the employment insurance side. The Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism and the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development are addressing both in terms of enabling people to access the workers they need.

The Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism has spoken very openly about trying to move to a system similar to what Australia has where employers and employees can match very quickly and people could come to our country. However, we also have to engage and work with groups like Polytechnics Canada to ensure that Canadians have the skills and training in the fields that will enable them to move forward and have a very good quality of life.

• (1215)

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague mentioned the job situation in Newfoundland. He also mentioned the job situation in his own riding and said that access to labour is a major issue.

I would like to get the member's comments on the impending changes to the Employment Insurance Act requiring people either to work in certain areas or having to give up their benefits at that time.

There is a plant in Port Union in my riding. It will take some time to get a new buyer for this plant if a new buyer does decide to buy the plant. Here is the issue. If the impending changes force people to move in that particular area, the issue of accessing labour becomes moot. It becomes less of a selling point for that particular plant.

I understand the original hypothesis as to why the government would want to do this, but in the end, for places like Port Union or Newfoundland outports, it could work against it.

Mr. James Rajotte: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question very much. I obviously do not know the specific situation as well as the member does, but I am happy to talk with him about it and see if there is anything I can do with respect to that particular situation.

In general, I would say that this government recognizes that. In fact, the work-sharing program that was introduced by this government was designed to do exactly that. I recognize the problem. Once workers leave a company or an area like Nisku, it is very hard to bring them back. Once they have moved on to another area or another company, it is very difficult to bring them back, which is why we introduced the work-sharing program. It covered part of the cost so that the company did not have to cover all of the cost in terms of that worker during that tough period. That is exactly what that program was designed to do.

Obviously, in terms of the facility itself, management should be looking at the accelerated depreciation if they want to invest further in their facility to upgrade or modernize it if it is closed.

Government Orders

However, in terms of the workers themselves, I am happy to look at whether there are work-sharing programs or other types of programs like that for that specific situation.

Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my comments are directed toward my colleague's comments on research and development.

I have the honour to serve as the deputy critic for science and technology on the NDP side, so my comments are with respect to the failure to renew funding for Sustainable Development Technology Canada, which succeeded in leveraging significant private capital and received praise from the expert review panel on R and D for the successful commercialization of Canadian green technology.

We know that in the current federal budget there is no new investment in green research, so we are missing out on an incredible opportunity to capitalize on the trillion-dollar global green tech market.

I would like to know my colleague's comments on that. Why are there no new investments in green research?

Mr. James Rajotte: Mr. Speaker, I welcome my colleague to her critic role.

In terms of investments into SDTC, she is absolutely right in saying it is an excellent organization, and I support it very strongly. I have done so on both the industry committee and the finance committee. It is an organization that will continue, as she well knows. It is also an organization we should perhaps look at—and this is something I have talked to the folks at SDTC about—in terms of moving to a model like an EDC, a model they would actually like us to look at, whereby they would bring in some funding and return some dividends to the government.

In terms of research and development in general, obviously a lot of initiatives here go toward what we would call green energy research. One of them is for clean energy generation. There is accelerated capital depreciation for large projects doing clean energy generation, which I would encourage the hydro sector in her province and other sectors to look at as well.

• (1220)

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my question will be short.

I want to thank the chair of the finance committee for his excellent speech this morning.

I have young people in my own family. My daughter is 21 and looking toward her future. What does this budget do for the future of young people in terms of job opportunities, not just in Ontario but across the country? Why is it important that we invest in innovation and research to allow for future employment opportunities for them across this country?

Mr. James Rajotte: Mr. Speaker, I will try to answer as quickly as I can.

Government Orders

I thank my colleague from Burlington. We do miss him on the finance committee. He was an outstanding member of our committee for many years. I know his daughters are very talented and very bright.

It goes back to my quote from the letter of the president of the University of Alberta in terms of continuing to invest in post-secondary education, in research and development and in the granting councils, so that they can work at basic research or in innovation commercialization and will have a number of job opportunities once they graduate from school.

However, looking beyond that in terms of lifelong learning, we have to move into an area where they may be going to school, going into the workforce, and then going back to school to upgrade their skills or upgrading their skills in the workforce. That is exactly what this budget is looking at doing.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to be here once again. After closing in on eight years of being in the House, I am standing to talk once again about how to deal with another budget and how we had hoped at some point to decipher this particular document and see how we can elevate debate within the House of Commons.

I would like to congratulate my colleague from Edmonton—Leduc, who did a fine job speaking to the bill. I do not necessarily agree with everything he said, but nonetheless he presented very well and always has.

In 2005 the Government of Canada signed new offshore agreements with two provinces regarding three pieces of legislation: the Newfoundland and Labrador Atlantic accord and accords with the province of Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador.

The federal government had worked out an agreement between the provinces to the satisfaction of both Premier John Hamm and Premier Danny Williams. The government proposed something on the order of a large payment up front and beyond that new calculations within the formula regarding equalization. The point was that as Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador were getting back on their feet, the clawbacks were really putting them back to where they were before, and the provinces wanted to be the principal beneficiaries of their resources.

In 2005 those agreements were included in a document similar to this, the budget of Prime Minister Paul Martin. I was sitting across the way, just behind the member for South Shore—St. Margaret's, and I remember my colleagues from Newfoundland and Labrador and the member for South Shore—St. Margaret's vehemently arguing for the Atlantic accord agreements to be taken out of the budget. They said they did not belong there. It was an omnibus bill, and they said it was trickery, tomfoolery. They said the government should not be doing this and that the agreements should be discussed in the House by themselves.

Let us fast-forward to 2012 and look at this budget document. It is a big document, and it contains a lot. One-third of it is about making fundamental changes to environmental assessments.

We can also talk about the fact that this document fundamentally changes many aspects of the governance of this country, including

old age security and even the Fisheries Act, which is important to the area I come from because it has major fishing industries.

We are talking about making a unilateral change to the funding of Canadian health care. We are talking about tearing up 100,000 immigration applications that have been worked on for years. We are talking about sweeping changes to employment insurance. All of this is contained in this one document.

People across this country are crying for some of this to be taken out and debated in the House separately. Not only are academics, experts, provincial politicians, provincial bureaucrats and former federal bureaucrats asking for some of this to be taken out of the budget: some Conservatives have said it themselves. It is funny how time tends to change things in the House.

Rather than lecturing the Conservatives about practising what they used to preach, let us talk about Bill C-38 and some of the concerns about it. I will admit that I would entertain some of the stuff in the bill. I look at some of the things as being positive moves forward, but the problem is I only have one vote.

Any time members want to ask me about some of the positive provisions in the bill, I am willing to talk about them. Unfortunately I only get 10 minutes and I have far less time to talk about the negative stuff, but I just cannot help myself, as members can gauge from the laughter across the House. They too are waiting for me to move on to the negative stuff.

The government is talking about moving the old age security benchmark from 65 years of age to 67. The OECD, Canada's chief actuarial officer, the Parliamentary Budget Officer, and even the government's own experts agree that the change is not necessary because Canada's OAS program is already sustainable.

• (1225)

I get very many calls from people in my riding on this particular issue, telling me the response they get is only, "Well, don't worry; it's not going to affect you in the short term. It's just going to affect your children or grandchildren, that's all. No need to worry."

We also want to talk about the departmental cuts that were announced and the layoff of 19,200 federal public servants. On the surface, people might say it is a good cost-cutting measure to cut the number of public servants so that the government can put us in line to control the deficit.

However, here is the issue. The Conservatives are going about it in a way that is not smart and that is certainly not achieving good government services.

In the smallest communities of this country, people are asking, "Where is the Government of Canada? It just doesn't exist anymore." The only thing that exists is a flag flying above the post office, a crown corporation.

Service Canada cuts in my riding are going to be severe. Processing jobs in smaller communities are now being moved to larger communities. Where is the sense in that? These are jobs that can be done from anywhere.

Government Orders

Granted, the Conservatives want to get inefficiencies out of the system, and I appreciate that. However, this is not an efficient way of providing government services to our smallest communities. The government prides itself on providing good benefits to rural Canada, but the services are just not there. We are going in the opposite direction.

Just today a rally started in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, probably about 25 minutes ago, to save the marine rescue sub-centre, a centre that the government is closing. We never received any indication that it was a duplicate service or that this service could be covered by what is going on in Nova Scotia at the JRCC complex there. Now we find ourselves putting safety at risk up there. I personally think public safety is at risk.

The calls to reverse the decision have gone unanswered and were actually turned down, in the case of the regional minister for Newfoundland and Labrador, particularly the MP for Labrador.

It raises the question of quick decisions that were not thought through, yet when evidence is put forward that the decision was not a right one and that perhaps we should reflect upon that decision, it is met with absolute denial. It is met with indifference when we say to the government that there are a lot of sections in this bill that should be brought out, discussed and put through the appropriate committee, especially the environmental stuff, as my colleague, the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, will attest.

It is unbelievable. The preamble summaries describe something different from what is contained within the text of this particular legislation.

The environmental assessment that we discuss in here, through the fisheries department especially, should be brought through the environmental committee and vetted through that. One-third of this document pertains to that aspect.

I am sure the question will arise, and I have no issue with achieving economic development beneficial to people who have the skills and knowledge to do this type of work, whether it be pipelines, oil and gas, or in the mining industry. However, due diligence is called for. In this particular case, it is sadly missing.

Now, as time closes in, I want to talk about the final part, which is the employment insurance part of it.

Some of the positive aspects include the maintaining of the best weeks part this program, in this case variable best weeks, and the pilot project extended from 2005.

The problem is that the government is trying to get more work generated by this new committee. The government now will have the ability to force people into a situation of having to move halfway across the country, or at least that is what we assume is going to happen.

Unfortunately, the government will not hear of juxtaposing EI with economic development, but in certain cases, in order for smaller communities to reopen a closed plant, this approach does not work.

● (1230)

We have to look at this and realize and get the right information as to why the smallest of communities would suffer from this type of change.

I want to thank the House for allowing me this small opportunity to discuss this in the House. I wish we had more time.

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it sounds as if my hon. colleague is holding out a bit of an olive branch to the government side, and he sees many things he may support in this document.

However, I want to double back to something that is a recurring theme in this Parliament and that is the use of time allocation to discuss and debate vitally important issues that affect all Canadians. In the past and in this Parliament, the government has said we have already debated these things, that we debated them in the last Parliament so why would we need to go through the process again, which underlines the Conservatives' anti-democratic inclinations.

I wonder if the member could speak to this issue and whether he thinks it is appropriate for the government to impose time allocation on this massive document that has not 100% to do with the budget it is supposed to be referencing.

Mr. Scott Simms: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Davenport for bringing that forward. I did not get to that part of my speech about the time allocation part. The member touched upon the key component of that, which is to say that the Conservatives argue that a lot of this was debated in the past. At what point in the eight years I have been here did we have a serious discussion about raising the age of OAS eligibility from 65 to 67?

It did not happen. I do not recall evidence being brought forward in this House or any committee that shows this is a necessary action to, in their words, save the system.

The Conservatives talk about downloading to the provinces. Moving the age from 65 to 67 is going to download a huge amount of money to the provinces, but of course, as they say, we are not to worry as it does not affect us. However, they forget to say that this affects our children.

The time allocation part is a sad mistake because of the very essence of this particular document that pertains to, as the member said, so many things that to call it "omnibus" is an understatement. Not only did the Conservatives do that, but they also invoked time allocation.

Mr. Gerald Keddy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that the member for Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor only had 10 minutes and he decided to look at what he thought were some of the negative aspects of the budget. When I have my time, I will talk about what I see as the entire positive budget we have brought forward.

Government Orders

However, I have a question on process, and the hon. member did not quite get time enough to finish it. The fact is that the NDP decided it would take all the time to speak to the budget and not give the Liberal Party of Canada any time to speak to the budget. I have been in this House for 15 years and I have never seen that happen, so I would like some comments on that.

• (1235)

Mr. Scott Simms: Mr. Speaker, yes, that was not very nice.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I feel this discussion of time allocation particularly keenly as the leader of the federal Green Party with a lot of background as a former environmental lawyer, having worked for much of my life on creating the bills that are now being destroyed. When I worked in the Mulroney government, I charted the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act through the machinery of government at the Privy Council Office to get permission to legislate. I have worked on this legislation for more than 25 years and I am watching it being destroyed, and I may never get a chance to speak in this House. With time allocation, it does not look like I will get to speak now and I certainly did not get to speak on the budget itself.

What does the hon. member for Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor do, as a parliamentarian, when items that were never part of a budget are in a budget implementation bill? The destruction of the federal Fisheries Act was not even hinted at in that budget. How does the Conservative Party get away with sticking it in an omnibus bill when it was not even mentioned in the budget itself?

Mr. Scott Simms: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague. I find her situation in the House very similar to the Conservative party, and this is the only comparison I draw between the Green Party and the Conservative Party in the House; they are both a party of one.

However, in this particular situation, she is right because so much of this material was not even brought up as a preliminary discussion in the beginning. Let us go back to the Fisheries Act. The Conservatives attempted to bring in a brand new Fisheries Act years ago, under Loyola Hearn. What is in there now was not even discussed then, when they had a chance to bring in a new act, let alone now.

It is ridiculous.

Mr. Gerald Keddy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will take my time to talk about budget 2012 and the positive changes it will bring to Canada. I will also take a bit of my time to correct the record on some of the things that my hon. colleague across the way from Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor had to say.

I will go back to the beginning of his speech when he talked a bit about the 2005 budget and the Atlantic accord. The changes that came forward under our government to the Atlantic accord ended up with Nova Scotia getting a better agreement. Unfortunately, Newfoundland and Labrador was no longer a have-not province and did not reap the benefits of Atlantic accord. Every province in Canada should have that problem. Good for it; I applaud it for that reason. Some of the environmental changes the hon. member talked about in this budget will actually improve the process for oil and gas

operations on the east coast of Canada, including of course the very rich oil fields on offshore Newfoundland.

It is worth taking a look at what we are discussing. Budget 2012 is called coming back to balance. We are going to do that in a way that will bring budgetary balance and will also streamline some of the processes we have in this country, be they environmental, banking or employment insurance related, not to be negative but to assist our country to get back to a balanced budget.

It also important to note that nothing in this budget is going to bring in a new Fisheries Act. Since the hon. member is from Newfoundland, I hope he would understand the importance of some government in the House some day bringing in a new Fisheries Act. If he does not, then I am left shaking my head.

I come from a part of the world that is dependent on the fishery. In the southwestern end of Nova Scotia, there are 1,688 boats fishing in the most affluent fishery in Canada, without question. I can say that they are hobbled by a Fisheries Act that dates from 1867. They are absolutely handcuffed by archaic legislation and it is time we moved that 1867 act into the modern era. That does not mean we throw the baby out with the bathwater. It does not mean that all the changes that have come forth regarding the fishery get put into the act. I would hope that in this day and age, in 2012, we can look back at that act, say let us move it forward, modernize the fishery and keep all the good things that we have brought into the fishery along the way.

I would like to speak directly to the budget bill and how it affects my home province of Nova Scotia. Nova Scotia has always been a trading province, from the days of the clipper ships to the days of the schooners. It was the part of Canada where Champlain first stepped ashore in 1604. We have consistently made a living off the land and off the sea and have traded our resources around the globe. That is the only way Canada can survive and excel today. We have tremendous resources and a great workforce, and we have to trade those resources around the world in a global economy. We are absolutely capable of doing that.

• (1240)

I am chagrined when the union membership across the country stands and says that we should put up protectionist walls and barriers. It would be the end of society as we know it. It cannot be done. We need to trade and we need to trade on an equal footing. That means insisting that our trading partners have rules-based trading and that they respect our rules and we respect their rules. It is not complicated.

Government Orders

Both of the hon. members before me, as well as the member for Edmonton—Leduc, talked about the major projects initiative. The economic action plan 2012 proposes \$54 million over 2 years to continue to support effective project approvals through the major projects management office initiative, which has helped to transform the approvals process from major natural resource projects by shortening the average review times from 4 years to 22 months.

I think just about everybody in this place would agree that if they had a large project ready to go forward, with investors on the hook for billions of dollars from all over the planet, they would expect to get that passed sooner than four years. Surely it needs a good environmental review and proper inspections not surely that can occur in 22 months without duplication by the province and the feds. The average approval process, as I said before, is 4 years and, if we go to 22 months, I do not think there can be any disagreement from the opposition side of the House.

Consultation under the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act would propose that \$13.6 million over two years to the Canadian Environment Assessment Agency to support consultations with aboriginal peoples related to projects assessed under the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act to ensure that their rights and interests are respected and that they benefit from economic development opportunities. I think that is called consultation. There is nothing wrong with that. We need to bring the players to the table but it must be done in a timely fashion.

We will strengthen pipeline safety. Every Canadian would support strengthening pipeline safety. I have a colleague who has the sour gas pipeline that goes behind his house. It is safe. Nobody is in danger from that. However, we know it is safe because of a regular inspection system. Again, this is not rocket science. This is good, common sense stuff.

The reality will be that oil pipelines and gas pipelines inspections will increase from 100 to 150 inspections. I am sure that is something that everyone in this House would support.

This is extremely important to the offshore industry in Nova Scotia and the offshore oil and gas industry in Newfoundland and Labrador. Offshore oil and gas developments create jobs and support economic growth in Canada's communities. Continued exploration activity is required to bring new projects to communities and sustain these economic benefits over the long term and depends on modern reliable seismic technology and data.

To advance exploration for new developments, economic action plan 2012 proposes to amend the Coasting Trade Act to facilitate access to Canadian waters for the global fleet of vessels that undertake seismic surveys. This would ensure that private sector companies have the information they require to identify potential resource development opportunities.

In Nova Scotia alone, this budget will mean a lot more dollars for Nova Scotia. It will be almost \$2.5 billion when we look at the increase in transfer dollars, the increase in the health transfer, the increase in the social transfer and the increase in the training opportunities that will be made available. This is a good budget for Canada and a great budget for Nova Scotia.

● (1245)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I heard my colleague talk about how consultations about the environment are all well and good, but that they have to happen in a timely manner and not take too long.

How can he talk about beneficial consultation when the government is imposing a time limit on the study of its omnibus bill? Those of us who like parts of the bill are forced to support the whole thing.

[*English*]

Mr. Gerald Keddy: Mr. Speaker, consultations are great if they lead somewhere but if consultations are only an opportunity to obstruct and delay and there is no intent from both sides when they sit down to actually seek a common goal, then the consultations do not work.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the bill would have a very profound impact on all Canadians. For example, increasing the age for OAS from 65 to 67. We in the Liberal Party believe people should have the choice to determine if they would like to retire at age 65. The government believes differently and the budget sets, at least in part, the framework to that.

The budget itself is an issue of priorities. The government has made the decision to cut over 15,000 civil servant jobs, which will have a significant impact on services being provided to Canadians. If we put that in the perspective of what the government did earlier this year when it decided to spend tens of millions of dollars on increasing the number of politicians, not to mention the staffing that will be required for those politicians, Canadians look at it and see a government that is cutting back on the civil servants in the same year in which it is proposing to increase the number of members of Parliament.

How does the member justify that sort of an approach when it comes to priorities for Canadians? It did not need to increase the size of the House of Commons and the government knows that.

● (1250)

Mr. Gerald Keddy: Mr. Speaker, I listened closely to the question but I am not sure if the hon. member supports the increase in the number of members in the House of Commons or if he is actually against the increase.

The number of members in the House of Commons needs to be divided up as fairly as possible across the country. We know we have constitutional obligations. However, it is about democracy and about people having representation. There is a cost to that but it is a cost as a Canadian that I am willing to pay and I think all Canadians are willing to pay.

There are a number of other questions there. One of them was on old age security. The member is absolutely right. We do not need to change old age security today. Nothing will happen tomorrow, or next year, or the year after that. However, when we get into 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, the system will collapse in on itself and no one will have old age security. Therefore, we are moving now to put a program in place to ensure we preserve old age security for future generations.

Government Orders

Mr. Chris Alexander (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to give the member for South Shore—St. Margaret's an opportunity to enlarge on an issue that obviously is not apparent to the opposition. We hear lots of complaints about what is going to be a very long budget debate, about the length of the debate, without any comments on the substance of the budget, this bill.

Could the member inform the House what the benefits for all parts of Canada are of having such an attractive jurisdiction for business and job creation in the country. Whether it is lower taxes or responsible resource development, whether it is affordable social programs or budget balance, these are all benefits that will bring jobs and investment to every part of the country.

Could the member describe some of the—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): A short answer, the hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Gerald Keddy: Mr. Speaker, a short answer will be very difficult. However, for me, the real success of the budget bill is the way it dovetails the budget in with our trade initiatives because our trade initiatives are leading to jobs and opportunities for Canadians and jobs and opportunities for workers in foreign lands to trade with Canada. This is a win-win situation for all on a planet that is not that stable and we need people to do well. First and foremost, we need Canadians to do well and we will do well because of the budget.

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our people are growing older and living longer. What does that mean and what should we do about it? I will start with old age security.

In 1975, there were seven taxpayers for every senior. Right now, it is four. In 20 years, there will be two taxpayers for every senior. What is more, people now collect OAS for longer.

When Canada introduced old age security in 1951, the average life expectancy was 79 and eligibility was 70, meaning that the average person did not collect old age security at all. Today, eligibility is 65 and life expectancy is 82, meaning that the average person gets 17 years of OAS.

As we project forward, life expectancy is growing by 47 days per year. Put morbidly, the average dead person this year is 47 days older than the average dead person from last year. In 2031, people will die on average at about 84 years old, which means that under the current rules they will collect OAS for almost two decades. This is a benefit, I remind members, that was expected to be collected for only a very short period of time.

Put together, these facts mean that in two decades the number of people on OAS will double, the cost will triple and the number of taxpayers supporting each retiree will fall by half. By consequence, OAS will rise from 15¢ of each dollar the federal government spends to 25¢.

The Macdonald-Laurier Institute calculated, "...by 2040 Canada would face a \$67 billion deficit (in today's dollars) based on current policies and demographic change".

We need to think of OAS as a glass of water. Retirees can only drink out of the cup in benefits what workers pour into it in taxes. If Canadians are drinking out of the cup faster than what is poured in, then someone goes thirsty. We can look to Greece and Portugal where government debts are rated at junk status to see the consequences of drinking from the cup of profligacy.

We reject that failed model and choose the Canadian way instead. Our plan lowers the cost and therefore protects the integrity of the old age security system with a gradual increase to 67 years of age over the next decade and a half without impacting anyone currently over the age of 54.

The opposition parties oppose this move. In fact, they are already promising to increase the costs associated with this program. The NDP deputy leader moved and the Liberal leader seconded bills in this House that would allow people who have only lived in Canada for three years to collect old age security. The cost to taxpayers would be another \$700 million. How would the opposition make up the \$67 billion gap that I described earlier and how would it further fund billions of dollars in new promised entitlements?

The oppositions' election strategy is a cunning one. They would tell voters that they will give them a lot of free stuff and make someone else pay for it, and who better than big corporations. Who are these big corporations? Perhaps they mean Canadian Natural Resources Limited, the country's largest independent oil producer with over 100,000 barrels from the oil sands every day. It makes them a perfect target for the NDP.

The NDP promises to raise taxes on that company's profits but where do these profits go now? Well, they go to the shareholders. One of the biggest shareholders is the Quebec pension plan with \$576 million invested. When the company profits it pays more money to the public pension.

•(1255)

Based upon today's dividend, this oil company pays the Quebec pension plan \$6.3 million. That is enough to pay the pensions of 1,100 Quebecers. There is only one problem. Canadian Natural Resources can only pay Quebec pensioners after it pays taxes to the government. Business taxes up, pension benefits down.

This is not an isolated example. Over half of the CPP's assets are invested in businesses, including the Canadian Oil Sands Trust, Suncor Energy, Imperial Oil and Athabasca Oil Sands Corporation. When these businesses profit, the CPP has more money to pay out to Canadian retirees. Raise taxes on those companies and they will pay a lower return to the CPP.

Government Orders

Take the Canada Post pension plan. It is no different. Its top five holdings are: the Toronto Dominion Bank, Royal Bank of Canada, Bank of Nova Scotia, Suncor and Canadian Natural Resources. Banks and oil companies, the twin villains in every left-wing storyline, pay dividends to the pension fund of these unionized postal workers. These dividends come from after-tax profits. If the business tax rate rises, the after-tax profit remaining to the pension fund drops. In that sense, the opposition's proposed business tax hike is really a tax on the pensions of unionized blue-collar workers.

What happened to solidarity? The answer is that solidarity is incompatible with the opposition's overriding sentiment: envy.

If we do not have a job, the opposition tells us it is because someone else does. If we do not have enough to retire on, it tells us it is because businesses are too profitable. If a company fails, the opposition tells it that it is because someone else is succeeding. If we are doing badly, it says it is because someone else is doing well. In sum, the opposition suggests that "them" has too much and "us" has too little. So it will take from the "them" and give to the "us". Yet "us and them" does not work when our destinies are intertwined.

The retired Ottawa mailman relies for his pension cheque on the earnings of an Alberta oil sands company. In order to buy the machines and hire the workers in the first place, that oil sands company must seek investment from the mailman's pension fund. In that sense, the two are symbiotic and interdependent. Millions of voluntary transactions like these connect us all. Independently of government, through the free market, we truly are all in this together. Class distinctions start to fade. Millions of everyday Canadians now own shares in the largest corporations, through their pensions, RRSPs and tax-free savings accounts.

While some try to turn workers against business owners, free enterprise turns workers into business owners. That is the Canadian way: a low-cost government, a free people, a shared destiny and a bright future.

•(1300)

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a wonder to behold when this Parliament gets an economics lesson from the government side, a government that has racked up the biggest deficit in Canadian history. This sort of nonsense is unbelievable.

The member likes to obfuscate in this House on a daily basis. In this instance, he is talking about the supposed inability of Canada to sustain its OAS. The government always compares us to the economic basket cases of Europe. The amount of GDP that Greece and Portugal spend on their public pensions is 12% and 11%, respectively. Canada spends 4%. How dare the member try to compare our expenditures on public pension with that of these members of the eurozone? It is this kind of prevarication which this side of the House rejects and which Canadians are increasingly rejecting and are angry about.

I wonder why this member insists upon bending and weaving through the real issues of the—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order. The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, the NDP's economic policy is not a matter of theory anymore. It is not a matter of promises. It is a matter of real-time existing case studies. NDP governments exist more or less in Greece, Portugal and across Europe. Nine euro currency countries follow NDP policies and they have now been downgraded. Greece and Portugal have now junk status government debt. Their government debts are 1.5 times the size of the entire economy. That is the result of NDP tax-and-spend policies.

The only criticism that the leader of the NDP has had for the eurozone debtor nations is that he believes they are not spending and borrowing enough. He said that a week ago today. We on this side of the House of Commons reject that failed model. We support the Canadian way, a low-cost government, a free people, a shared destiny and a brighter future.

•(1305)

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to address the point raised by my hon. colleague about the fact that people are living longer, especially since OAS was first established.

The health-adjusted lifespan of the lowest 10% of income earners has not increased. That means that when they get to about 60 or 65 years of age, life will be very difficult for them because of health issues. If the government really wanted to trim the cost of OAS, why did it not protect this most vulnerable part of our society, the lowest income earners, the lowest decile of income earners, who really need OAS and GIS?

Mr. Pierre Poilievre: We are protecting old age security, Mr. Speaker, by making it affordable for the long run. That is especially important to people most in need.

We do not protect pensioners and seniors by raising taxes on the companies that pay benefits into the pension funds, RRSPs and tax-free savings accounts that Canadians rely on for their retirements. As a result, we recognize the need for a low tax plan that would create jobs, wealth and long-term prosperity so that companies across this country can pay for the retirements of the people who need it most.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on March 29, the Minister of Finance tabled budget 2012 in Parliament. This budget includes reckless cuts to services that Canadians depend on, such as old age security, health care, provincial transfers and environmental assessments.

Government Orders

The Conservatives claim that their budget focuses on job creation. However, they themselves admit that their budget will result in the loss of 19,200 public sector jobs. The fact is that it will raise the unemployment rate. The Parliamentary Budget Officer estimates that this budget will actually result in the loss of 43,000 jobs in Canada. That, combined with this government's previous cuts, brings the total number of jobs lost to 102,000.

Bill C-38 is the 2012 budget implementation bill, but it is about much more than just the budget. This massive 421-page bill includes not only the measures described in the budget, but also many changes that were not previously announced.

This bill is not like other bills. It is over 400 pages long. This bill will have a major impact on Canadians. At least one-third of Bill C-38 is dedicated to weakening environmental protection and rules.

Furthermore, this bill introduces a series of measures that were not previously announced and that will result in reduced transparency and greater secrecy around the government. These measures include decreasing the Auditor General's powers.

Today I wish to draw your attention to one aspect that I find extremely worrisome. It has to do with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. It is clear that several parts of the agency are about to be privatized. These cuts to food inspection represent a step backward. We know that the listeriosis crisis in 2008 came about because of a lack of inspectors. Would hon. members not agree that the government should take the safety of Canadians seriously and that it should be transparent when communicating with Canadians?

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency is one of a number of agencies that will be excluded from the Auditor General's supervision. Bill C-38 eliminates all references to the Auditor General in the Canadian Food Inspection Agency Act. For instance, the section of the act that was previously called "accounting and audit" will henceforth be called simply "audit". Mandatory financial and performance audits by the Auditor General have also been eliminated.

Another important and troubling fact is that Bill C-38 eliminates mandatory financial audits by the Auditor General for 12 agencies.

Bill C-38 also amends the Seeds Act to give the president of the CFIA the power to issue licences to persons authorizing them to perform activities related to controlling or assuring the quality of seeds or seed crops. This amendment opens the door to having private companies do food inspection related work. This also sends worrisome signals about the growing likelihood of privatization of some parts of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency.

This bill will also significantly change how the Canadian Food Inspection Agency monitors and enforces non-health and safety food labelling regulations. In other words, when a company states that its products do not contain any traces of peanuts, for example, the consumer will have no way of knowing whether that is true or not. This government believes that it is up to the consumer to judge the trustworthiness of labels. Parents with children who have peanut allergies will not know whether they can trust what the company is saying.

● (1310)

If they have any doubts, they will have to go online and address their concerns to the companies and associations involved.

In essence, the government is suggesting that we wait and see whether anyone has an allergic reaction. If so, then the consumer will have to go to the company's website to tell the company that it lied. The government is not getting involved.

The government is completely withdrawing from the process and is making individuals responsible for food labelling regulations. That makes no sense. Companies will say whatever they want, in order to sell their products to as many people as possible.

These changes scare me and I know I am not the only one who is scared. A woman in my riding wrote to me to tell me how much these changes would affect her family, as her son has a nut allergy. She is very worried about him and rightfully so.

I would also like to go over some of the comments made last week by my Conservative colleague, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture, when talking about budget 2012.

He asked the opposition to at least vote for increased investments in food safety.

I would now like to explain why I am voting against them. First, the government is not giving us the opportunity to vote for individual measures because it has decided to put together a gigantic budget bill that encompasses radical changes, such as the increase in the eligibility age for old age security benefits.

So no, I will not be voting against more investments in food safety; rather, I will be voting against an enormous bill that seeks to change environmental laws, the immigration system and employment insurance, among other things.

Second, what my colleague has not mentioned are the \$56.1 million in cuts to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. Let us do the math. If we add \$51 million to a program and then take away \$56 million, what do we have left over? A negative figure, or cuts. It leaves us with a weaker inspection program.

That is why I will be voting against the budget implementation bill.

Canadians need transparency. It is not by sneakily passing measures that will have a major impact on Canadians that the government will earn the trust of the people.

Introducing such a wide-ranging bill and allowing so little time to debate it undermines what Parliament is here to do, because members will not have the opportunity to get all the information they need about the bill's content and impact.

It is sad that the government is continuing to ignore what really matters to Canadians: environmental protection, old age security, health care and job creation.

How can we properly do our job as elected representatives of the people when the government is not giving us the time we need to get all the information we need?

Government Orders

The Parliamentary Budget Officer has said repeatedly that MPs are not getting the information they need for proper oversight. He also released a report clearly showing that the old age security program is completely sustainable as it stands now. In fact, the Parliamentary Budget Officer has even said that the program would be sustainable if benefits were increased.

Why is the government continuing to make Canadians pay? Why is it ignoring the various reports that clearly prove certain facts? Why is it so determined to fast-track a bill that includes so many cuts? Who will benefit from these measures?

Those are some of the questions I am asking myself as a mother and an MP. What sort of future do we want for future generations? For all these reasons, I will vote against Bill C-38.

• (1315)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member raises some valid points and I want to highlight and pose a question for the member in regard to what is encompassed in this legislation.

Normally we would talk to and have a good healthy debate and questions and answers strictly with regard to budget items. However, in this budget the government has made changes, some of which are exceptionally profound in terms of issues such as our environmental legislation. All of that has been bundled in through the back door of the budget debate. I would ultimately suggest that it should have been sectioned out. There are probably three years worth of legislation packed into the bill.

How does the member feel about the manner in which the government has limited debate on the huge legislative agenda behind the budget debate on which we are all expected to vote?

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau: Mr. Speaker, this is a huge bill. It is over 400 pages. It is full of information. As has been said before, the devil is in the details.

It would be a good idea if the government sent agriculture issues specifically to the agriculture committee and environmental issues to the environment committee. It is as if it is scared to have an open and informed debate on this because it knows that if it were divided, it probably would not pass. Canadians are not for this at all.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Chris Alexander (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Berthier—Maskinongé for her speech. I have a very simple question for her.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer says that the program is affordable as is, but all of the other government authorities that we have access to, as well as all of the authorities in other OECD countries, not to mention most experts and informed observers in Canada, disagree, so who is she going to trust? The lone holdout, or all of the other experts in the field, including government experts who unanimously say that the system must be reformed in order to preserve it for future generations?

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Parliamentary Secretary for his question.

We trust the Parliamentary Budget Officer. He says that the system is fully sustainable. This situation is not unexpected. Forty years ago, we knew that the baby boomers would be turning into seniors around this time. So we are ready, and the system is fully sustainable. We trust him.

[*English*]

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague brought up a couple of really important points. One was as a parent thinking about the future and the increasingly large gap between the opportunities for young people and those for middle-aged and older workers.

Does the member have concern, and has she heard this concern from other parents in her riding, around the issue of generational inequity and the fact that the budget and the government seems to have no interest in rectifying this huge gap?

• (1320)

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau: Mr. Speaker, as a mother, I want to look to the future and hope that it is brighter for our children. It seems the future will be a bit more dim for our kids under the Conservative government.

We hope that with amendments and maybe by sending correct parts of the bill to the right committees we might change things and could then look toward a more positive future, but that is very hard to do with the government.

Mr. Merv Tweed (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am privileged and honoured to speak to the budget implementation bill to do with the budget presented by our government. It is ironic that following a federal election in May and then a provincial election in Manitoba shortly thereafter, we have two governments basically on the same track in the sense of process, but on exactly opposite ends with regard to what people want and expect from their governments. I plan to draw some of those comparisons to the recently released budget in the province of Manitoba and the budget that the Government of Canada has put forward.

In budget 2012 we talk about a road map to the future. In the last election, we made commitments to the people of Canada that we would keep taxes where they were or reduce them. We would create no new taxes and balance the budget in a period of time so we could move forward with some of the other needs and requirements of the people of Canada. Manitoba, on the other hand, made very similar promises in the last campaign. It would not raise taxes or establish new taxes and it, too, would move toward a balance budget.

However, when we look at the actual details of the two budgets, we see a completely different story. It is important that Canadians see for themselves what can happen when a government is run by Conservatives, who listen to the people of Canada, consult with them and make a plan that meets their needs, as opposed to a government in Manitoba that completely ignores the people of the province and continues to bear huge tax burdens on them and their children well into the future.

Government Orders

Our budget was about jobs, growth and long-term prosperity for Canada. We have done many things in the past several years in previous budgets. It is only right that I take a look back at what we have accomplished, make comparisons and see where we will go in the future.

The federal government is proposing no new taxes and a reduction in taxes in certain areas. We have extended the accelerated capital cost allowance for manufacturing and processing equipment, encouraging purchases. With a strong dollar, the manufacturing side is looking to renew a lot of its equipment and would do so with a capital cost allowance that would allow companies not only to write it off faster but would also allow them to update their equipment to make them more efficient, more effective and environmentally friendly. We have also increased the small business limit to \$500 and reduced the small business tax rate to 11%, all things Canadians told us they wanted and required to move forward, and we have delivered on them.

We have also lowered the federal corporate income tax rate to 15%, making us one of the most, if not the most, competitive jurisdiction of the G8 countries. That speaks well to the investment that is going to flow into Canada. It has already started and will continue to flow because people with money to invest look at countries that are safe, reliable and predictable in their plans going forward. We have had a consistent track record since 2006 of reducing taxes, creating new jobs and wealth for Canadians and opportunity for investment.

We have also increased the lifetime capital gains exemption to \$750,000. Why is that important? We have had many discussions here on other issues, but, as we know, over time costs go up and returns have to go up to match them. Allowing businesses to take the \$750,000 tax exemption creates better opportunities for the future.

As I said, I want to draw some comparisons, and I will do that now.

The NDP government in Manitoba is planning to overspend this year's budget by \$500 million. That is \$500 million more in spending than the core revenue it is bringing in. This is what an NDP government does to the country. It has foisted taxes and new charges on the people of Manitoba to the tune of \$184 million. In a time of restraint when countries are collapsing under the burden of financial difficulties, we have a province that continues to tax its people to the nth degree. I suggest the people of Manitoba were fooled when they were told by their current government that there would be no new taxes foisted upon them.

• (1325)

The Manitoba government has expanded the provincial sales tax to include more services and insurance premiums, adding \$95 million more tax burden on the working people of Manitoba. Not finally but one of a few measures, it has increased gas taxes by 2.5 cents per litre, taking another \$44.5 million out of Manitobans' pockets.

I often think back to when we moved to the metric system. We all knew what the price of a gallon of gas was. When 2.5 cents is added to a litre it does not seem like much but it is over 10 cents a gallon for anybody who remembers what a gallon was worth. To add that to

the people of Manitoba in one fell swoop, without any discussion, after promising it would not do it, shows what we get with a government that is not committed to making the hard decisions to move a country forward, to move a province forward.

In a short time in office, our government has cut taxes 140 times. That speaks to an investment community that knows it has a government that is on a path of lowering taxes, creating wealth, creating opportunities and creating jobs.

We have created nearly 700,000 new jobs in the last little while, which is unbelievable in a world where the economies of so many countries are struggling just to see the light of day. We only need to look back to yesterday's news to see how important that is in certain countries in the world.

Our government, with its low tax policies, has removed one million low-income families, individuals and seniors from the tax rolls. Why is that important? The opposition tells us that people are in a situation where they are unable to pay their taxes or are barely scraping by. Well, one million more of them have an opportunity to spend their money the way they choose as opposed to being taxed by the government and then having it given back to them in dribs and drabs as some are proposing.

What else have we done? We have increased the amount that Canadians can earn tax free, again a decision made by a government that wants people to become independent, to think for themselves and to make their own financial decisions, not have governments telling them where and when they should make payments. We do that by lowering taxes. It puts more money in their pockets and gives people the ability to make their own decisions that affect their life, their family life and their community life.

We provided income splitting for seniors, one of the greatest things that could have happened in the sense of allowing people to share incomes to lower their taxable rate. We lowered the GST from 7% to 5%. We introduced a children's fitness tax. We brought in the tax free savings account. I know many people of my generation were RRSP buyers. At the end of every year we would do that to reduce our taxable income. Now that money can actually be put into an account and taken out tax free as it grows in the future. If I were giving advice to anybody in Canada today, it would be to take a long, hard look at that tax free savings account as one of the many vehicles that we now have to prepare for our retirement plans, for the future and for our family's future. It is important for people to look at this. This is not a paid political announcement but people should check with their accountants to ensure they are getting all the benefits.

When we look at what we have done across the country, a typical Canadian family today is saving \$3,100 in taxes. Imagine having that every year and being able to make a decision on how to spend it or what to do with it, whether to invest in our children's education or our retirement, or whether to buy that retirement home we have been looking for. All of those things are doable and possible when we have a government that is committed to low taxes.

Government Orders

I opened by making the comments that our plan is to keep taxes low, create new jobs and opportunity, create the environment for that to happen and, in doing so, we will create long-term prosperity for Canadians. It is what we told Canadians we would do in the last election and it is what we are doing today.

I urge all members to take a hard look at it and, instead of finding what they can vote against, they should look for the positives that they can vote for and support this budget.

● (1330)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse (Louis-Saint-Laurent, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Brandon—Souris for his speech.

Since he brought up the subject of Manitoba and lower taxes in his speech, I wonder if he could talk about the fact that, when the NDP came to power in Manitoba, the tax rate for small businesses was 8%. Since December 2010, as he probably knows, that tax rate has been zero. Small businesses no longer have to pay taxes. This is stimulating Manitoba's economy and it is great for Manitobans.

There are about 100,000 businesses and 97% of them are small businesses. This is an excellent measure. I really do not understand why he is trying to scare people by saying that the NDP might raise taxes, when really, if we look at the facts, Manitoba has an excellent government and very good economic measures.

I would like to hear his comments on that.

[*English*]

Mr. Merv Tweed: Mr. Speaker, I was part of the provincial government in 1999 when the NDP won the majority and took over government. The NDP claimed that there was no money left in the till until it found \$1 billion. It spent that billion and continued to spend at a reckless amount. It is still spending above \$500 million more in a province of 1.2 million people. That is what the NDP government is committed to spend and that is more than it will take in revenue this year. Plus, it continues to tax every living breathing individual and beyond now with the services it is now taxing people for.

It is simply an obvious case of numbers and the numbers do not add up for the Province of Manitoba. I do not want the NDP to ever be responsible for the numbers of Canada.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have been listening to a lot of talk about Manitoba. I am not sure if this is the right forum to get into arguing about the Government of Manitoba. One either wants to be an opposition member in Manitoba or a government member here. Therefore, I will stick to the budget that we are dealing with in this House as we talk about Bill C-38, and I have a very quick question.

A section in the legislation amends the Salaries Act to abolish the Public Appointments Commission that the Conservatives so excitedly brought in. I was wondering why they would do that.

Mr. Merv Tweed: Mr. Speaker, like all good governments, when we look at departments and do a strategic review of expenditures everything is up for discussion.

I would advise the member, and I suspect he was here at the time, that back when the commission was formally introduced, the opposition, in a minority government, railroaded the government into refusing the person we put forward as the chair of that committee and, therefore, we saw no more need for it.

Mr. Chris Alexander (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, all of us on this side are grateful for that excellent speech from the member for Brandon—Souris. It is a gold mine of information about an implementation act that has benefits across the board for Canadians.

However, the opposition members continue to complain about this being the shortest debate on budget implementation in a generation, even though no Liberal budget was ever debated this long under its government. They also complain that it covers too much ground. Could the member comment on the inter-relatedness of all of these measures?

To have a strong economy, an attractive jurisdiction for trade and investment, we need a stable financial sector. We need a responsible approach to resource development. We need jobs and growth and all of the enablers that go with it. Could he remind this House why all of these measures are needed in one bill?

● (1335)

Mr. Merv Tweed: Mr. Speaker, like all budgets and like all future budgets, there must be a thread of connectivity to them. If we do want more investment in our natural resource sector, we need to look at ways of expediting the approval or disapproval process for all the investments that will come into Canada over the next several years. We want to ensure that the people looking at Canada as an investment area will find Canada the most attractive. We have moved a long way in this bill. Obviously, a lot of things are being contemplated in this implementation bill but all, I would suggest, are necessary to move Canada forward.

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this has been a fascinating debate so far. We have heard the government blame the NDP for the economic collapse of Portugal and Greece. We heard another member tell us that all is not quite right in Manitoba these days. The member seems to be confused about which jurisdiction he represents. It has been an amazing day.

Some days one imagines that all members on the government side come from *Pleasantville*. In their world no senior has a problem paying rent. In their world seniors have a choice of putting their excess money in a tax free savings account or buying a retirement home? That is the kind of conversation those members have.

I am not quite sure what is being served in the government lobby before the Conservatives come out and say their speeches but one wonders if maybe they need to check the ingredients. However, the ingredients may not be accurate because, according to provisions in the budget implementation bill, food labelling will not be as accurate or we will not be as sure of their accuracy. The budget implementation bill that we are debating today contains elements that have nothing to do with the budget, which is what we are trying to get to the bottom of.

Government Orders

I will talk about a couple of things about the budget. The budget does nothing to address the chronic unemployment rate of our young people. The official rate for youth unemployment right now is just over 14%. However, everyone knows that the unofficial rate will be closer to 20%. That brings us into the range of the unemployment rate among young people in those European countries, such as Spain, that the Conservatives love to talk about. We are creating an economy in this country that leaves out our youth.

Government members like to talk about the great future of our economy. They also like to extol the virtues of Conservative fiscal management. They all have short memories. When the last majority Conservative government left office, it saddled Canadians with a massive public debt and deficit. Other Conservative governments enjoyed chumming up to those in the Bush administration in the United States. When it left office, it saddled the American people with huge, onerous public debt.

The present Conservative government has the largest deficit in Canadian history but those members try to ignore that fact as they talk about the choices that seniors have in our country.

I am honoured to serve the people of my riding of Davenport and to speak on their behalf today. I want to talk about a woman I met last week in my riding who is a small business owner. She works about 13 or 14 hours a day on her business and is also looking after an elderly parent. She asked me about the new rules with respect to OAS. She told me that she was working tirelessly and that she was looking forward to reaching the age of 65 but said that she was under the cutoff and that she would need to work until she was 67 years of age. Suffice it to say that she is not happy. The sentiment I heard from her is the same sentiment that I hear from people right across my riding and in fact across the city of Toronto.

People work hard, play by the rules, pay their taxes, raise their families and sometimes look after their parents. What do we see from the government? We see the government making cuts, for example, to immigrant settlement services in the city of Toronto. Those cuts will make it much harder for new Canadians to settle and get a foothold in our country and in our economy.

● (1340)

Raising the age for OAS is going to drag on the economy because we know that people who have very little means are going to spend just about every dollar they have on the economy. That is part of what a vibrant economy does. However, what is happening here is a delay for two years. If that had happened today, we would have thrown about another 100,000 seniors into poverty. Canadians remember, but we have to remind the government that it did not once mention OAS in its platform in 2011. In fact, what the Conservatives said was that they were not going to cut OAS, that they were not going to cut seniors' pensions. They have indeed done that.

The Conservatives also talk about 12 years from now being somewhere off in the distant future. That is just 12 years and it is going to go by in a heartbeat. For the woman in my riding who is working 13 hours a day trying to keep a business going, raise a family and look after an elderly parent, that 12 years is going to go by in a flash. However, she is going to have to work another couple of years before she can access what everyone else before her has been able to access in this country. This is not fair. Not only is it not

fair, but it does not make economic sense in our country at all. Again, the government likes to talk about its savvy economic chops when it has yet to address the issue of 300,000 job losses in the manufacturing sector since the recession.

One member decided to take a whack at Manitoba. I guess the Conservatives are getting bored with taking a whack at Ontario, which they have done since I entered this House in May 2011. Ontario's manufacturing base has been battered and the government refuses to acknowledge that the economic platform and the one presented in this budget fail to address the employment and manufacturing crisis in Ontario. The Conservatives can talk all they want about the jobs, but \$12 an hour is not enough for someone to afford shelter and certainly not enough to raise a family. These are the issues that Canadians are concerned about and want action on from their government. The fact that we are in a time allocation yet again underlines what Canadians increasingly understand, that while the government talks the talk of accountability and transparency, it has absolutely not walked the walk since it came here in 2011.

This is the kind of obfuscation and prevarication that Canadians are getting tired of from the government. We need a real debate about the economy and about youth unemployment. Not only are youth unemployed, but youth are increasingly saddled with increased student debt. So now the Conservatives are telling young people that when they leave school they are going to have a \$25,000 to \$50,000 debt and, by the way, they are not going to be able to find a job. I hear this in my riding all the time. I talk to parents whose 25-year-old children are still living at home; they have degrees, they have done the things the government says they should do, they have a higher education and they still cannot find a job. The government has not addressed that situation, and it has certainly not addressed it in Ontario. We look forward to that debate and to turning things around in 2015.

● (1345)

Mrs. Stella Ambler (Mississauga South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the member opposite about jobs and, in particular, what he thinks about this government's jobs creation record and the fact that we have created 700,000 new jobs and, most importantly, that 90% of those jobs that were created since 2006 have been full-time jobs.

In my mind, it does not matter how old people are. These jobs are available to students who are graduating. They are available to middle-aged Canadians. They are available to older Canadians.

Does the member opposite believe that our strategy, which is to keep the economy strong and to look after the long-term prosperity of our country, is the right one to create jobs?

Government Orders

Mr. Andrew Cash: Mr. Speaker, I have been waiting a year for someone from the government side to ask my opinion about its jobs policy. I can tell my hon. colleague across the way that there are people in my riding who have not one job, not two jobs, but three jobs. The reason they have three jobs is that none of them pays enough to properly afford their rent or child care or to put food on the table. They are in a mad scramble. That is not just a pretend story; that is a real story. It is happening right across the country, and the government is absolutely blind to it. That is what I think about the government's jobs record.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the things many Canadians looked for in the budget debate was some demonstration of leadership on the health care file. Health care is the single greatest expenditure for virtually every province. There is a dependency on Ottawa not only to provide leadership in terms of standards and so forth, from coast to coast, but also to provide money and the secure feeling of a commitment that the government will be providing in the years ahead. I am referring more so, I guess, to the health care accord.

I wonder if the member might want to provide comment. Given there is so much in the budget, one of the things that seems to be lacking is any genuine commitment to the future of good quality health care, based on the Canada Health Act. That is something I believe many Canadians are concerned about.

Mr. Andrew Cash: Mr. Speaker, indeed, Canadians are looking for a real debate on health care, and they do not want to read the story in the fine print of an omnibus bill to implement the budget.

That said, I think all of us on this side of the House look forward to supporting my hon. colleague from Parkdale—High Park's reasoned amendment that we should not be supporting this budget implementation bill.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Claude Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened enthusiastically to the speech given by my hon. colleague. It was very interesting.

I would like to know a little more about the lack of leadership shown by this government, particularly concerning food inspection, but also concerning the environment and heritage, since we have also been talking a bit about these things.

• (1350)

[*English*]

Mr. Andrew Cash: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for the opportunity to speak a little about the heritage file.

The government has cut about \$200 million from heritage. One thing we have to remember is that when we invest in arts and culture in our country we make back our money at least twofold. Arts and culture is a major economic driver in the country, and to withstand the savage cuts that are in the budget makes absolutely no sense. It makes no sense on a nation-building front, but it also makes absolutely no sense on an economic front.

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in economic action plan 2012, our government is looking ahead, not only over the next few years but for the next generation. The reforms presented are substantial, responsible and necessary.

They would ensure we remain focused on enabling and sustaining Canada's long-term economic growth.

More specifically, economic action plan 2012 would help create high-value and well-paying jobs by investing into entrepreneurship, innovation and world-class research. It would support jobs and growth by investing in training, infrastructure and responsible resource development, thereby providing new opportunities for young Canadians, first nations, newcomers and unemployed Canadians.

We believe in sustainable public finances, which is why we have found fair, balanced and moderate savings in government spending. Budget 2012 would take important steps to address the challenges and help take advantage of the opportunities in the global economy, while ensuring sustainable social programs and sound public finances for future generations here in Canada.

Our government recognizes that Canada's seniors have contributed enormously to our country and continue to do so. This is why we introduced new measures to improve their quality of life and expand their financial opportunities.

The ThirdQuarter project is an innovative online approach to help employers find experienced workers over 50 who want to keep using their skills in the workforce. We propose \$6 million to extend and expand this successful project across the country.

Our government is also committed to improving the flexibility in choice for senior workers. For those wishing to work longer, we would provide them with an opportunity to voluntarily defer taking up the old age security benefit, starting in July 2013. Those who wish to do so would, of course, receive a higher annual adjusted pension.

With regard to OAS, our government is committed to sustaining our social programs and to securing retirement for Canadians. However, to ensure the sustainability of OAS, the age of eligibility must be raised. As a result, we would be gradually raising the age of eligibility from 65 to 67, starting in April 2023 and being at full implementation by January 2029. This is nothing new, as 22 of 34 OECD countries have increased or are planning to increase pension ages in their own public pension programs. Australia, Denmark, Germany, Italy, Spain and the United States are increasing their statutory pension age to 67. The United Kingdom and Ireland are raising it to 68. The Netherlands will raise it to 67 and then link it to life expectancy.

Canada is linked to the global economy now more than ever. Increasing our age of eligibility for OAS from 65 to 67 is no longer a choice but a necessity.

Government Orders

The facts on OAS speak for themselves. The number of Canadians over the age of 65 will increase from 4.7 million to 9.3 million over the next 20 years. The OAS program is dated from a time when Canadians were not living that long. Canadians who are privileged to live today have healthier lives. Consequently, the cost of the OAS program would increase from \$36 billion per year in 2010 to \$108 billion per year in 2030. Meanwhile, by 2030, the number of taxpayers for every senior would be down to two, from four in 2010.

To ensure sustainability of OAS, the age of eligibility must be raised from 65 to 67. We have ensured that the changes are made with substantial notice and with an adjustment period and that they would not affect current retirees or those close to retirement and would give others plenty of time to adjust to the changes and plan for their retirement.

Along with supporting our seniors, we must support our students. We all want Canada's students to succeed in the global economy with the help the best education possible. That is why since 2006 our government has provided the much-needed support for our students.

However, in budget 2012, we would be doing even more to ensure Canadians are better equipped and better integrated into the workforce. We would be increasing support for youth employment opportunities with an additional \$50 million spending on improving skills links and career focuses for students, through the youth employment strategy. We would also be doubling graduate interns in innovative firms by investing an additional \$14 million, to double the resources of the industrial research and development intern program. This would place even more students into practical hands-on research internships in Canadian companies.

The goal is to have as many Canadians working as possible. Budget 2012 would take action to create jobs now and provide more opportunities to Canadians.

• (1355)

To create jobs now, we will be extending for one year the hiring credit for small businesses, a practical, proven measure that encourages businesses to hire more workers. We will provide new funding to improve border infrastructure and we will make new investments in local infrastructure through the community infrastructure improvement fund.

To provide more opportunities for Canadians, we will make it much easier for Canadians who are out of work to identify new opportunities and for employers to find workers they need. For EI recipients in areas of sporadic employment, we will initiate modest changes to the program to better focus our support for Canadians who are eager to work.

We will provide new incentives and opportunities for members of the first nations living on reserve to participate fully in our economy and to gain greater self-sufficiency.

Finally, we will take action to build a fast and flexible economic immigration system that will be better able to fill gaps in our labour force while at the same time attracting more of the entrepreneurs we need.

As a member of the Red Tape Reduction Commission, I am very pleased to speak on our government's continuing commitment to

reducing regulatory burdens faced by businesses of all sizes. In January 2011, our government created the commission, fulfilling a budget 2010 promise. After a year of extensive Canada-wide consultations, the commission brought forth recommendations to reduce irritants to businesses that impede growth, competitiveness and innovation. One of our findings was implemented by the government earlier in the year: the one-for-one rule requiring the government to eliminate an existing regulation whenever it adopts a new one. This assures that at the very least, red tape will cease to increase.

As a former small business owner, I appreciate first-hand the vital role small businesses can have in creating jobs. Our government recognizes this too. That is why in budget 2012 we are committed to helping them grow and to succeed. We have concluded a number of key measures to support the growth of small businesses, including the extension of the hiring credit for small businesses, a temporary credit of up to \$1,000 against a small firm's increase in its 2011 EI premiums over those paid in 2012. This temporary credit will help about 536,000 employers defray the costs of additional hiring.

We will be increasing direct support for business innovation by providing \$110 million per year to the National Research Council. This in turn will double support to small businesses through the industrial research assistance program and expand the services provided to businesses through the program's industrial technology advisers.

There will be \$95 million spent over three years and \$40 million per year ongoing to make the Canadian innovation commercialization program permanent, which will help Canadian businesses demonstrate their innovative products and services through federal procurement.

Finally, \$14 million will be spent to expand the industrial research and development internship program in order to place more Ph.D. students into practical research internships in businesses.

Speaking of Ph.D.s, situated very close to my riding of Niagara West—Glanbrook is McMaster University. I was delighted to see that it will be receiving \$6.5 million over three years for research projects to evaluate ways to achieve better health outcomes for patients while also making the health care system more cost-effective. Having met with a number of constituents attending McMaster University, I am sure they will be pleased with our government's commitment to this sound institution.

Statements by Members

The global economy is changing, and the competition for the brightest minds is intensifying. The pace of technological change is creating new opportunities while making older business practices obsolete. Canada's long-term economic competitiveness in this emerging knowledge economy demands globally competitive businesses that innovate and create high-quality jobs. Budget 2012 announces a commitment of over \$1.1 billion over five years to support research and development and \$500 million for venture capital. These investments and actions will keep our economy strong, create high-quality jobs and ensure that Canada is a premier destination for the world's brightest minds.

In closing, let me say that I believe this budget delivers our promise to maintain a steady course toward both economic recovery and deficit reduction. I applaud the Minister of Finance and I urge all of my colleagues to support Canada and support this budget.

• (1400)

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

The time for government orders has expired. Questions and comments for the hon. member for Niagara West—Glanbrook will take place when the House returns to this matter.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

GOVERNOR GENERAL'S HONOUREES

Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize two of my constituents who were recently presented with honours by the Governor General here in Ottawa.

Darren Bieber of Weyburn, Saskatchewan, was awarded the Medal of Bravery for his heroic efforts in rescuing a passenger from a submerged vehicle on April 28, 2007, just outside Stoughton, Saskatchewan. Mr. Bieber, along with Mark Janke of Elbow, Saskatchewan, took care of the survivors until emergency crews arrived on the scene.

Also, Larry Pearson from Weyburn was presented with the Caring Canadian Award for his work in recognizing members of the Canadian Forces, although he himself has never served. Mr. Pearson is active in the Weyburn branch of the Royal Canadian Legion and is committed to ensuring that our men and women in uniform are honoured by Canadians for all that they do.

As the member of Parliament for Souris—Moose Mountain and on behalf of the Government of Canada, I would like to congratulate Mr. Bieber and Mr. Pearson on their recent awards.

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CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF ELIZABETH FRY SOCIETIES

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today marks the start of National Elizabeth Fry Week. This week Elizabeth Fry societies across the country will hold community events to enhance public awareness regarding the circumstances of

marginalized, victimized, criminalized and institutionalized women and girls.

The 26 chapters of Elizabeth Fry societies aim to break down the negative stereotypes that exist about women in conflict with the law. They ask us to see that it is the survival activities resulting from inequality, poverty and homelessness that are increasingly likely to be the causes of their criminalization. They draw our attention to the fact that young first nations women are significantly overrepresented in Canada's prison population.

Since 1969, the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies has worked to increase the availability of community-based social, health and educational resources for women and girls to help keep them out of prison. I would like to thank the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies for its continuing commitment to providing services for marginalized women and girls, both offenders and victims. Perhaps most importantly, I want to thank the association for reminding us all to look beyond the marginalization of the women they work with so that we can once again see the positive potential in all Canadians.

* * *

VETERANS

Mr. Lawrence Toet (Elmwood—Transcona, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this weekend I was pleased to spend some time with veterans and members from the Prince Edward, Elmwood and Henderson Highway legion branches in Winnipeg. We gathered together to pay tribute to veterans at the regional Decoration Day parade. I was honoured to lay a wreath and speak on behalf of the Government of Canada at this event.

A few weeks prior to this I was in the Netherlands, where I and some of my fellow members of Parliament attended a ceremony and laid a wreath at the Canadian War Cemetery in Holten. The soldiers buried there were from the regiments that liberated my mother and her family from Enschede in the Netherlands.

These two events were reminders again of the sacrifices made by the men and women of the Canadian Forces, sacrifices they made to assure not only our freedom here in Canada but also the freedom of many others in countries far abroad. It was wonderful to have an opportunity to remind both young and old Canadians of how important it is for all of us to never forget these wonderful men and women who have fought so bravely for the freedoms we at times take for granted.

Let us never forget.

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700 DAVID HORNELL VC SQUADRON

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, two weeks ago I had the tremendous honour of reviewing the outstanding cadets of 700 David Hornell VC Squadron, which has been serving the youth of Etobicoke since 1960. The squadron is named after a native of Etobicoke who was one of only two RCAF airmen to be awarded the Victoria Cross in World War II.

Statements by Members

Over 200 young people aged 12-18 years belong to this award-winning squadron. They excel in band, debating team, drill team, effective speaking and precision rifle team. In fact, they were recognized by the Air Cadet League as the top squadron in central Ontario in 2011, under the command of Major David Forster. The air cadet program develops citizenship and leadership, encourages fitness and fosters an interest in civil and military aviation.

I celebrate our extraordinary youth. Our future is brighter because of their efforts, and I am enormously proud of each and every one of them.

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●(1405)

SUNSHINE FOUNDATION OF CANADA

Mr. Ed Holder (London West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the Sunshine Foundation of Canada as it celebrates its 25th anniversary.

Established in 1987 by a London couple after the loss of their son, the Sunshine Foundation has grown to become a national charity that makes dreams come true for children with severe physical disabilities or life-threatening illnesses. I salute executive director Nancy Sutherland, her staff and Canadian volunteers and financial supporters. Their clear vision is that every Sunshine child should live his or her dream.

As a member of the national board of directors, I was personally touched to participate just a couple of weeks ago in the Sunshine DreamLift in Ottawa that sent 80 of our kids, Canada's kids, to Disney World for the day. For these young people, it was life-changing. Approximately 50,000 children across Canada medically qualify for a Sunshine dream. They have endured more than we could imagine. These kids have entrusted us with their most personal dreams, and we cannot let them down.

We continue to grow and raise awareness of Sunshine in communities across the country. Together we can make Sunshine dreams a reality for Canada's kids.

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GOVERNMENT POLICIES

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last Wednesday a new report was tabled in this House concerning the state of Canadian pipelines and refineries.

We support a central component of the report's main recommendation: that any changes to the environmental assessment process should not "reduce the current public access to the review process".

A mere day after this report was tabled, the government dumped its giant budget bill on this House. The budget bill tears out the heart of the environmental assessment process and greatly limits public participation.

These changes concern my constituents. Kinder Morgan has formally announced plans to build a giant new crude oil pipeline through the centre of our city. Under the new budget bill laws, there is no guarantee that any public participation will be allowed on this project.

The government should abide by the committee's recommendations. It should ensure it does not reduce the public's ability to voice their legitimate concerns on this or any other major development.

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PORTAGE—LISGAR HOCKEY TEAMS

Ms. Candice Hoepfner (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I congratulate two exceptional hockey teams from my riding of Portage—Lisgar.

The Pembina Valley Hawks girls' hockey team won the western female midget hockey championship and went on to win the nationals at the Esso Cup in Charlottetown, P.E.I., just one week ago.

This victory marks Manitoba's first national midget women's title since 2009. The team did a great job.

Congratulations also to the Portage Terriers who, for the fourth time in the last five years, are champions of the Manitoba Junior Hockey League. Having recently played in the Anavet Cup against Saskatchewan's Humboldt Broncos, the Portage Terriers will move on to show those Broncos who is really the best in the west by clobbering them on their home turf.

In fact, they kicked off the RBC Cup last night with a huge win. These talented youth are reminders of the pride and spirit of our community and of the love of hockey that defines Canadians.

Good luck to the Portage Terriers, and congratulations to both teams.

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PREVENTION OF SKIN CANCER

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today is Melanoma Monday, and we are raising awareness of common yet preventable skin cancer.

My wife Kelly has survived melanoma skin cancer on more than one occasion. While she was fortunate enough to beat it, not everyone will be so lucky. Out of the 5,500 Canadians who are diagnosed with melanoma annually, 950 will die from it.

UV radiation from the sun and artificial tanning beds are the main causes of melanoma and other forms of skin cancer. The World Health Organization has found sufficient and compelling evidence linking indoor tanning to melanoma and has ranked tanning beds as a level one carcinogen to humans, placing them on the same level as tobacco, mustard gas and asbestos. Studies have shown that using tanning beds at a young age increases the risk of skin cancer by 75%. Regrettably, more of our youth are using tanning beds.

I recently tabled a private member's bill that would prohibit anyone under 18 years of age from using tanning beds and would keep our youth out of this dangerous equipment.

Today members of the Canadian Dermatology Association are screening parliamentarians for melanoma, and I encourage all Canadians to get screened for skin cancer.

•(1410)

CHAMPIONS OF MENTAL HEALTH AWARDS

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I rise in the House to congratulate the winners of the 10th annual national Champions of Mental Health Awards from the Canadian Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health.

The award recognizes the outstanding contributions that Canadians have made to advance the mental health agenda: Mr. Michael Landsberg, a TSN broadcaster; Cardinal Newman Peer Mentors, of Stoney Creek, Ontario; Senator W. David Angus, Q.C.; Scott Chisholm, founder of the Collateral Damage Project; and Dr. Trang Dao.

Mental illness and poor mental health have a profound impact on Canadian society. It is estimated that one out of every five Canadians suffer from mental illness, and tonight they will be celebrating them in an awards evening.

On behalf of our leader and New Democrats from coast to coast to coast, we congratulate all the winners of this year's 2012 Champions of Mental Health Awards.

* * *

CEREMONY OF REMEMBRANCE

Mr. Paul Calandra (Oak Ridges—Markham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this weekend Ontario held its Ceremony of Remembrance for police officers who have fallen in the line of duty.

Hundreds of Ontario's finest have made the ultimate sacrifice in the pursuit of keeping our streets and communities safe. Words cannot convey our appreciation for those who serve us every day on the front lines.

Sadly, far too often this service ends in cutting short the lives of brave men and women at the hands of thugs and criminals bent on terrorizing society.

Three names were added to the cenotaph this year, including Constable Garret Styles, who died this year in East Gwillimbury. To his family and to all our heroes in Ontario and across Canada, I thank them.

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[Translation]

BAHA'I COMMUNITY IN IRAN

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very concerned about the international human rights situation. Still today, too many people are being oppressed because of their religious beliefs, their political opinions or their nationality. The Baha'is are one example, and those in my riding are worried about the fate of the Baha'i community in Iran. Since 2004, 545 people have been imprisoned for no other reason than their religious convictions.

The Iranian government considers these people threats to the nation, even terrorists. For 46 months now, seven teachers have been detained without just cause. Despite a strong show of support by the international community, Iran continues to persecute people who self-identify as Baha'i, even though their religion promotes peace and unity.

Statements by Members

Today, I again call on the president of Iran and the chargé d'affaires and head of mission, Mr. Sheikh-Hassani, to put a stop to the oppression and wrongful imprisonment of members of the Baha'i community. I also call on the government to do more to help these people.

* * *

[English]

THE BUDGET

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Brampton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada's economic action plan 2012 is full of measures to promote job creation. It is important that we pass this legislation quickly so these measures can start helping job creation in our country.

The NDP continues to look out for the interests of its special interest fringe groups and its big union bosses. Economic action plan 2012 includes important measures that will stimulate the Canadian economy while protecting the environment. This includes support for many environmental initiatives.

We will continue to strike a balance between protecting the environment and protecting the economy. It is time we bring this important bill to a vote so Canadians can see the benefits of Canada's economic action plan 2012. We urge the NDP to put the best interests of Canadians ahead of the interest of its special interest groups and big union bosses and support this important budget.

* * *

MENTAL HEALTH

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is mental health awareness week and today is National Child and Youth Mental Health Day.

Approximately 1.2 million children and youth in Canada are affected by mental illness and 70% of adults with mental health problems said that they noticed symptoms before the age of 18. However, fear and stigma are a big deterrents to seeking treatment.

One in five Canadians is impacted by mental illness, yet our primary health care system falls far short of helping those with mental health problems to get appropriate care. Indeed, mental illness is often undiagnosed and untreated until major symptoms appear and the patient is in dire need.

The federal government is the fifth-largest health care provider, but given the high rate of Inuit and aboriginal suicide, it is unconscionable that these programs have been cut when they should be augmented.

Early diagnosis of mental illness is critical. Early treatment and support programs are essential. Therefore, a comprehensive integrated national mental health strategy must be a core part of a responsive health care system.

Oral Questions

•(1415)

[Translation]

NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY

Mr. Robert Goguen (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the NDP recently appointed the hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie to a high-profile position in his shadow cabinet. This is another surprising choice by the NDP.

Let us look at the facts: the hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie voted with the yes side during the 1995 referendum. He has even represented an extreme-left, sovereignist party, Québec Solidaire. He has donated thousands of dollars to that sovereignist party's election fund. Even more unacceptable is the fact that his most recent donation to this radical sovereignist party was made this year.

The NDP leader has chosen a team that threatens dangerous economic experiments, job-killing taxes, and reckless spending that we simply cannot afford. This team has demonstrated a disturbing willingness to put the interests of a narrow band of activists ahead of the interests of hard-working Canadian families.

* * *

[English]

41ST GENERAL ELECTION

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in the last few days we have seen troubling new evidence further linking the Conservative Party of Canada to suspected voter suppression during the last election. We have learned that a single IP address now links RackNine calls to Conservative operatives and to the Conservatives' federal voter database. We know they used burner cellphones, proxy IP addresses and disposable credit cards in an attempt to hide their tracks. Elections Canada is questioning more Conservatives. Missing evidence about who accessed the Conservative database may never be recovered.

Despite this mounting evidence, Conservatives continue to deny any connection and are not even admitting that they are under investigation. No one trusts the Conservatives on this. When will the government do the right thing and call an independent public inquiry?

* * *

NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Blake Richards (Wild Rose, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the recently announced NDP shadow cabinet contains the member for London—Fanshawe, the critic for pensions. The member opposite is a union activist who had a stint in the Ontario NDP cabinet of the current federal Liberal interim leader. That disastrous NDP government was best known for destroying Ontario's economy in the 1990s. She supported the then NDP premier's devastating tax rates, the highest in North America, and his record deficits. She helped guide Ontario into its greatest job purge since the Great Depression, leaving Ontario then as the welfare capital of Canada.

The aftermath of the NDP government in Ontario offers a frightening glimpse of federal NDP plans for our country: dangerous

economic experiments, job-killing taxes and reckless spending we simply cannot afford.

The NDP has demonstrated a disturbing willingness to put the interests of a narrow band of activists ahead of the interests of hard-working Canadian families.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

THE BUDGET

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives have introduced a so-called budget bill more than 400 pages long, 70 acts, more than 753 clauses amended and one Parliament being asked to vote blind, gutting environmental protections, ripping up the Fisheries Act and eliminating entire laws. Asking a single committee to review the bill will mean that it will not get the scrutiny that it deserves.

Will Conservatives work with New Democrats, respect Parliament and agree to split the bill?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, budget 2012 is about creating jobs and opportunities for Canadians. We tabled this bill on March 29 and it is now May 7. Canadians want us to get on with the task of creating jobs, lowering taxes and having economic stability for the country and that is what this budget implementation bill is all about.

The budget implementation act will be debated more than any other budget implementation act that Parliament has seen in 20 years. We are getting the job done, delivering for Canadians and putting forward a responsible budget that Canadians support.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, allow me to quote someone familiar to my friend across the way. That person said:

—I would argue that the subject matter of the bill is so diverse that a single vote on the content would put members in conflict with their own principles.

Who said that? A younger version of the Prime Minister.

I remember working with the government in the early days on accountability. It seems like no one on that side is at all interested in the very word, never mind the notion. Is there anybody left over there who believes that Parliament should have the scrutiny and the power to review laws before it?

•(1420)

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the only party playing games with this budget is the NDP whose finance critic, in the first week that this budget was debated in the House, spoke the entire week, filibustered the budget bill for over 13 hours of debate and denied any other MP the opportunity to speak on it. The NDP members are proud of the parliamentary games they are playing.

Oral Questions

We are delivering a budget that we campaigned on, that lowers taxes for small business and that provides more training for young Canadians who want to enter the workforce. We are delivering. It is the NDP that has played games since day one. It is time to get back to work for Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague says that wanting to split the bill is an ideological position, but it was the position taken by the Prime Minister when he was in opposition.

Has power made him change his principles? For years, the Conservatives promised to do better than the Liberals, but now they are doing exactly the same thing. There is no transparency, no accountability. Why not split the bill and let the committees do their job?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's accusations are frankly ridiculous.

We tabled budget 2012 here in the House on March 29, and it is now May 7. It is time Parliament acted responsibly to benefit our economy and our communities. The Conservative government is going to keep its promises to lower taxes for families and for small and medium-sized businesses across Canada so that they can create jobs and opportunities for the future.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Standing Committee on Finance is supposed to study finance, not food safety. The Conservatives are going to cut environmental impact assessments, the Fisheries Act, health, old age security, and much more. It is not surprising that the Conservatives want to quietly pass this Trojan horse bill.

Are the Conservatives in such a hurry because they know that the more time goes by, the more Canadians will learn about the harmful consequences this bill will have for an entire generation?

[*English*]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, economic action plan 2012, which is the budget, is a major plan for jobs, growth and long-term prosperity in Canada. It is a large budget. It was rejected by both of the opposition parties within a few hours of the budget being announced on March 29. A large budget begets large budget bills.

There is the bill before the House. As usual, there will be another bill in the autumn, another large budget bill for jobs, growth and prosperity in Canada.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one of the most worrisome parts of this bill is the attack on old age security pensions. Under the bill, the retirement age will be raised to 67. Canadians will lose over \$12,000 in retirement income. The Conservatives ran on jobs, but the centrepiece of this Trojan horse budget bill is an attack on pensions.

Is the government seriously telling Canadians they have to wait an extra two years to get their pensions, but the government cannot wait more than one week for a serious parliamentary review of this bill?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there will be no reductions in seniors' pensions. In order to ensure the stability and sustainability of OAS, the age of eligibility will be gradually increased from 65 to 67 starting in 2023. It will be phased in over six years. That is a long way out. Right now, no seniors will have their pensions cut. Anyone who is near pension age will not see any change.

The hon. member across the way should stop fear-mongering among our seniors.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in establishing its priorities the government always makes a point of saying that it wants to do the best for men and women in uniform.

Given that today is Mental Health Day, given that this week the report of the Mental Health Commission of Canada is being released, and given that 20 serving soldiers committed suicide last year and cuts are being made in services for mental health by the Department of National Defence, how does the government justify that at this particular time?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is no question that the government has an obligation to make sure that those brave men and women who served this country so bravely have the services that they need. Our government is proud that in every one of our budgets we have taken measures and adjusted our policies to ensure that our veterans have the services when and where they need them.

Specifically, with regard to mental health that the leader of the Liberal Party raises, I am also pleased to point out the fact that mental health services for Canadian soldiers are at a greater number than any of our NATO partners. We are delivering for our soldiers. They deserve it because they are the bravest and the best.

● (1425)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the minister cannot deny the reality of the situation. This year, the government will be cutting services to veterans returning to Canada with serious illnesses. Veterans have to wait four, five or six months for services.

How can the minister justify such cuts to services at the very time when the Mental Health Commission of Canada is insisting that improvements be made and that the federal government show leadership?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there are simply no cuts being made to direct services to veterans. They need these services, and the services will be there for them because Canada asks the most of our veterans.

Oral Questions

We will continue to have these types of services in each budget. We will continue to keep our promises, make investments and implement policies that protect the needs of our veterans.

* * *

[English]

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, very empty words at a time when those people have served the country so well. Their time of deepest need for those services is when they come back to Canada.

I would like to ask the minister a final supplementary question with respect to the visit to Canada of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to food. I wonder if the minister could explain the embarrassing situation. We are the first industrialized country that the UN rapporteur has decided to visit because of complaints that he has received with respect to food services in Canada, with respect to nutritious food and with respect to running water.

How does the minister feel about that particular situation?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, without question, it is a fact that Canada has made extraordinary strides under our government in providing those core services to aboriginal Canadians both on and off reserve in housing, health care, education, food and water.

We look forward to the visit to brief the UN and to make the point that our government has delivered and is delivering. We will continue to deliver in the future. We are making sure that we have results. We want to make sure that it is clear not only to all Canadians but to the entire world that Canada is leading the world when it comes to protecting core services for all of our citizens.

* * *

[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, instead of following its own rules and providing a detailed formal statement of operational requirements to justify its decision to go with the F-35, the government preferred to use a letter with only 160 words—which, incidentally, was kept from parliamentarians—to confirm its decision to spend \$25 billion. It used a letter—with spelling mistakes no less—to justify its decision not to run an open, transparent competitive bidding process. It is completely ridiculous.

Can the entire Conservative selection process really be summed up in three paragraphs?

[English]

Hon. Julian Fantino (Associate Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the member opposite that the Government of Canada has taken action to ensure that all due diligence, oversight and transparency are firmly embedded in the process to replace Canada's aging fighter aircraft.

Moreover, we are following a seven-step action plan to fulfill and exceed the Auditor General's recommendations. This includes

freezing the funding and establishing a separate secretariat outside of national defence to lead this project forward.

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, trying to justify the sole sourcing of the multi-billion dollar purchase of fighter jets on the basis of a 160-word letter is not acceptable.

However, there is more to this story. Today, a retired assistant deputy minister from National Defence released a book. It is about how the F-35 process was botched. It is a disheartening and shameful story of Canadians being misled by their government and of a government that would do anything to hide from accountability.

Why will Conservatives not listen to reason and put this contract out to tender?

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government has said repeatedly that we accept the conclusions of the Auditor General and we are working to implement his recommendation. What he has asked is that the Department of National Defence come forward with updated and accurate cost estimates for the F-35 and table those in Parliament.

We are actually going much further than that because we think that a purchase of this size needs the utmost transparency and due diligence. Therefore, we have created a secretariat outside of the Department of National Defence. We expect to review all of the process to date, and all of that will be independently validated.

● (1430)

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is astonishing that the Department of National Defence justified its decision for the F-35 based on this 160-word letter. The letter was produced as justification on the day that it was requested. It mentions the term “fifth generation fighter” four times in one paragraph to try to convince Public Works that the F-35 is the only plane for Canada. However, the Auditor General notes that the term “fifth generation” is not even a description of operational requirements. We know it is really just a marketing term.

Why did the Department of National Defence do a sales pitch to Public Works instead of providing a complete and documented justification for its decision?

Hon. Julian Fantino (Associate Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, to repeat, the Government of Canada has taken action to ensure that due diligence, oversight and transparency are fully embedded in the process to replace Canada's aging CF-18 aircraft.

We are following a seven-step action plan. As was stated earlier, we are fulfilling the wishes and the recommendation of the Auditor General. From this point forward, this includes a number of steps that will mean freezing the funding. The secretariat, outside of National Defence, will be the one to oversee this process.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, not only did the Department of National Defence use this 160-word letter to justify one of the largest military procurements in our country's history, it engaged Public Works far too late in the game and provided no supporting documents explaining why the F-35 was the only aircraft.

Will the Minister of National Defence finally take responsibility for failing to follow the rules and commit now to an open and fair competition, as he did in the House in May of 2010, six weeks before the F-35 decision was announced by his government?

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government has been clear that we expect more transparency and increased due diligence before any purchase is to be made. We have frozen the funding. The Auditor General has said that no funding has been misspent because there has been no funding spent on the acquisition of any plane. No purchase will be made until all of these steps are taken into consideration.

We have set up the secretariat. I am glad to note that the Auditor General says that the government is going in the right direction.

* * *

[Translation]

41ST GENERAL ELECTION

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP): Mr. Speaker, new information has come to light about the Conservative Party's involvement in the electoral fraud that took place during the last election.

The IP address used to download the lists of voters from the Conservative database is the same as the one used by Pierre Poutine, who made illegal, fraudulent calls. The Conservatives stubbornly deny having any knowledge of this.

When will they take this violation of election laws seriously and co-operate fully with Elections Canada?

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we certainly are co-operating with Elections Canada, and we condemn all attempts to mislead voters.

The New Democrats have made false allegations about this on many occasions. They have had to apologize outside the House. Yet they have come back to the House of Commons with the same false allegations they have already had to apologize for.

They should stand up and apologize again.

[English]

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are sick of these bizarre answers.

Oral Questions

The fact is, mounting evidence is linking these voter suppression calls to the Conservative Party. Investigators are interviewing more Conservative operatives, Conservative voter lists were accessed from the same IP address Pierre Poutine used to order voter suppression calls, and missing evidence about who accessed the Conservative database may never be recovered.

No one trusts the Conservatives on this. When will the government do the right thing and call an independent inquiry?

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, further to what my colleague said a moment ago, the Chief Electoral Officer found troubling all of the sweeping allegations of wrongdoing without facts to support it. That is what we hear in this House day in and day out from an NDP that has had to apologize time and time again for defamatory comments that it has made in public.

Let us be clear. The articles that were published over the weekend made it absolutely crystal clear for the NDP. The Conservative Party is fully supporting this investigation and has played no role in it.

* * *

● (1435)

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, silencing electors is not enough for this government. It also wants to silence scientists and all of its critics.

The Minister of the Environment has gone too far in his attempt to discredit the people who criticize him. A group representing over 1,300 charities in the country has written an open letter to the minister asking him to retract his comments about environmental groups, which he accused of money laundering.

Will the minister apologize?

[English]

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the measures announced in the budget would provide more education to charities to ensure they are operating within the law and more transparency for Canadians who donate so generously to those charities.

We understand that registered charities are an important part of Canadian society and we encourage Canadians to donate generously. In order to protect Canadian interests, we have a duty to ensure that these organizations are operating properly and in compliance with all federal laws. That is what we will be doing.

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, so there is no apology.

Oral Questions

In a scathing editorial today, a national newspaper calls on the government to “halt its smear campaign”. Conservatives will stop at nothing to push through risky projects for their oil lobbyist friends. They have no concerns about passing on environmental and economic costs to future generations.

Will the minister stop making Canada a laughingstock and will he cease and desist his baseless smear campaign?

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can assure the hon. member and this House that our focus is on economic growth and long-term prosperity. It also is on protecting Canadian interests through ensuring that these organizations are operating properly and within the law. We are taking action so that Canadians can be sure that charities are using the resources appropriately.

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, so, still no apology, and the minister refuses to stand up for the environment.

In addition, the government is unapologetically trying to cover up its anti-environment agenda with a campaign of smears and intimidations against critics. However, Canadians refuse to be silenced, because there is too much at risk. Citizens are standing up to push back against plans to weaken environmental protections and to shut out concerned Canadians.

Will the minister shake the oil out of his ears, listen to Canadians and stop his unprecedented gutting of environmental legislation?

Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, every Canadian has an opportunity to speak.

This legislation will enhance environmental protection, it will create jobs and it will generate billions of dollars of revenue to governments for social programs. The opportunity will be there for opposition members to attend a special subcommittee of the Department of Finance, a finance committee. The public will also have an opportunity to speak. This will be the longest debate on the budget in 20 years.

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41ST GENERAL ELECTION

**Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
sor, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as we have just witnessed from members' denial and distraction, the Conservatives seem to be tripping over themselves once again over the election fraud scandal. It seems now that their strategy is completely collapsing.

We know that the IP address used by Pierre Poutine leads right back to the Conservative campaign, calls by a Conservative in the national war room are being investigated and they have sourced the lists to the Conservative database.

When will the government drop its denial and distraction and call a royal commission on this?

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member's question gives me an opportunity to clarify once again what I said a few minutes ago.

The Conservative Party has been fully co-operative from the outset on this. I think the articles over the weekend indicated such.

We are aware of concerns that have been raised in the local campaign involved, but we were also made aware of the deliberate attempt by the Liberal Party to mislead voters in Guelph and to hide the calls they made using a phony name and a phony number. All of this broke elections law. We found that out not because the Liberal Party came forward, but because it was brought forward.

• (1440)

[Translation]

Ms. Lise St-Denis (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I must insist. Now the noose is tightening regarding the robocall scandal. It has recently come to light that the IP address used by Pierre Poutine was that of a Conservative campaign worker. Furthermore, the list used to call non-Conservative supporters was taken from the Conservative CIMS database.

What more does the government need for it to redeem itself and share all information with the authorities?

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first of all, the Liberal leader has already had to apologize for making false allegations against several businesses and individuals in that regard.

Second, one must admire the audacity of the Liberal Party. It is the only party that has a member—the member for Guelph—that admitted to having made calls to voters using a false name and number. The Liberals broke the law. It takes some nerve for them to turn around and accuse us.

* * *

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of the Environment has accused Canadian environmental charities of money laundering. That is a serious criminal offence triggering international obligations under FINTRAC, the G8 and the G20.

The minister's allegations are irresponsible. Could he actually define money laundering? Could he provide a specific example of it? Has he reported anything to FINTRAC or the RCMP? If not, will he withdraw his reckless allegation intended only to smear people he does not like?

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, we do understand that registered charities are an important part of our society and we do encourage Canadians to donate generously to these charities. However, in order to protect Canadian interests we have a duty to ensure that these organizations are operating properly and spending their resources appropriately.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one in ten Canadians and one in five single-parent families are affected by food insecurity.

Today the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food is visiting Canada, the first OECD country to receive him. Instead of welcoming him with open arms and taking the matter seriously, the Conservatives are slamming the door in his face with a bang.

Approximately two million Canadians do not have access to healthy food. Why does the government continue to ignore this problem?

[English]

Hon. John Duncan (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since 2006, our government has invested significantly in shared priorities with first nations to access healthy and affordable food, housing, education, water infrastructure and economic opportunity. We will continue to work with our first nation partners to ensure that they can participate fully in Canada's economy.

As well, Canada was the first G8 country to fully disburse our United Nations L'Aquila pledge on agriculture and food security. Our officials are meeting with the rapporteur. They will provide briefings on the programs and initiatives in place to ensure that access—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé.

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Ministers of Health, Aboriginal Affairs, Agriculture, Fisheries and Foreign Affairs have all declined to meet with the UN representative.

Canada's reputation in the world continues to suffer as the government looks the other way when it comes to food security. All Canadians, families and children deserve access to safe and secure nutritious food.

Why is the Conservative government refusing to even talk about this serious issue?

Hon. John Duncan (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we certainly are talking about this issue with the rapporteur. We have officials who will be meeting with the rapporteur. They will be offering briefings on the programs and initiatives in place to ensure access to healthy, affordable food, and they will respond to any questions he may have.

* * *

● (1445)

[Translation]

HEALTH

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives' lack of leadership on health is appalling.

Canada is the only G8 country without a mental health strategy. To remedy that situation, the Mental Health Commission of Canada

will release its new strategy tomorrow. The Conservatives' inaction on mental health is costing this country \$50 billion a year.

Will the government promise to implement this plan? Will it do its part to fund this strategy so that the provinces are not left to pick up the whole tab?

[English]

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am looking forward to being part of the launch of the Mental Health Commission's strategy tomorrow. The report will highlight that everyone has a role in addressing mental health, —all levels of government, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, as well as charitable organizations.

By the way, when we established the Mental Health Commission of Canada, the NDP voted against it.

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I could talk about a number of groups that play a role in addressing mental health, but the federal government is not one of them.

[English]

Our federal government has taken mental illness far too lightly. We had to wait until 2007 before instituting the Mental Health Commission. We are still the only country in the G8 without a mental health strategy. That is certainly not leadership to be proud of.

Will the government commit to providing the proper leadership to implement the new mental health strategy put forward by the Mental Health Commission, and will it do its part to fund it?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I stated, I am looking forward to participating in the launch tomorrow.

As I stated before, it was that party that voted against the establishment of the commission.

From our side, to help achieve the objectives of the Mental Health Commission, we have committed to providing long-term stable funding to the provinces and territories that will see health transfers to each jurisdiction reaching \$40 billion.

We will also continue to make strategic, targeted investments around mental health that supports our communities and advances our understanding and treatment of mental illness in Canada.

* * *

JUSTICE

Mr. Blake Richards (Wild Rose, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada's justice system should always put the rights of law-abiding Canadians ahead of those of criminals. Canadians are increasingly concerned about the violent and reckless behaviour displayed by those who participate in public riots.

Oral Questions

Those who vandalize the homes and businesses of hard-working Canadians should not be able to hide their identity while doing so. That is the reason that I brought forward my Bill C-309, the concealment of identity act.

Would the Minister of Justice please update this House on the government's position on my legislation?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Wild Rose for introducing the legislation and for all the work he does on behalf of his constituents.

As the House knows, our government is committed to standing up for the rights of all law-abiding Canadians, which is why I am very pleased to say that the government will give complete support to the concealment of identity act. It has our complete support right throughout the process because this would create two new Criminal Code offences that would specifically target those who wear a mask or a disguise while taking part in a riot. That kind of behaviour damages communities and should not be tolerated. We are sending out the message that if one attempts to hide his or her identity while participating in a riot, he or she is committing a criminal offence—

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Alfred-Pellan.

* * *

[Translation]

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, thanks to the Conservatives, the British criminal Conrad Black is lounging around his Toronto home. The Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism wants us to believe that routine procedure was followed and that he was not at all involved, when in fact he has previously been involved in many other similar matters.

Does the minister really think that we are gullible enough to believe that he had absolutely nothing to do with this matter?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when I learned in February of the possibility that Mr. Black might apply for a temporary residence permit, I spoke with officers from the department to tell them that I did not wish to be involved in any way in the matter and that the application should be processed normally and independently from the minister and the minister's office.

The application was processed according to immigration law and regulations, in a fair and independent manner and in the same way as over 10,000 cases every year.

[English]

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that is news to those who waited for months, if not years, for similar answers. Never have the wheels of immigration justice turned so fast as for the Conservative friend and British criminal, Conrad Black. We no sooner learned of Black's application to return to Canada than there he was, sitting in his mansion in Toronto. This is the same man who, from his prison cell in Florida, lauded the Prime Minister as belonging to “the ranks of the most important federal leaders of Canadian history”.

Would the minister tell us—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (1450)

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, does the lavish praise for the Prime Minister explain how this convicted fraudster slipped into Canada so quickly?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I really find the NDP's position on the politicization of the immigration system bizarre.

The reality is that the NDP leader intervened to seek political privilege for a convicted cop shooter in the United States, a foreign national convicted of shooting and wounding a police officer. The NDP wanted political intervention to give that person a temporary resident permit. It wanted political intervention to stop a former vice-president of the United States from coming to Canada. Now it wants political intervention to override a decision of public servants on this individual's application. Our system is characterized by the rule of law, not political prejudice.

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as members can hear, hypocrisy abounds. Conservative friends—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Newton—North Delta has the floor.

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims: Mr. Speaker, hypocrisy on the side of my colleagues across the aisle abounds. Conservative friends get to jump the queue while legitimate refugees take their chances before a board stacked with Conservative appointees. We now know that those who fail the process to become a refugee judge get to have a do-over until they are rewarded. We do not know how many failed candidates are appointed anyway, because the decision happens behind closed doors.

Why is the government refusing to implement a fair and open process to appoint these judges who make life-and-death decisions?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it gets stranger and stranger over there. We are, in fact, completely depoliticizing the process for the refugee protection division. In the future, that body will be staffed by professional members of our permanent public service, not by Governor in Council appointees.

I should point out for the member that we have already massively improved the appointments process for appointments to the IRB. Only one out of every ten applicants makes it through the pre-screening process and is considered for appointment. We have appointed high-quality candidates. The IRB is responsible for deciding which individuals will staff the RPD in the future as public servants. That is how it should be.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if the Conservatives are convinced that the procedure was fair and not hypocritical, they need to go public with it. We are talking about a secret procedure to arrange that their friends are judges in cases where refugees no longer have access to essential drugs for chronic illnesses. While the Conservatives are busy engaging in favouritism, they are not doing their job with refugees.

When is the minister going to put an end to the favouritism and start to focus on the real immigration issues?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is no favouritism.

To begin with, we have implemented a completely independent system for the appointment of IRB members, with a pre-selection process in which 90% of applicants are not put forward for appointment.

Second, we are creating a system in the Refugee Protection Division whereby, in future, officials from the IRB, an independent and quasi-judicial organization, will be the decision-makers, and not people appointed by the Governor in Council.

That means that we have an independent system controlled by the IRB and not by the government.

* * *

[English]

THE BUDGET

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the budget bill completely rewrites Canada's environment laws. In the Senate, the Liberals asked that the bill be split up so that the relevant Senate committee could study it. The government actually agreed.

Since the Conservatives agreed to break up the bloated bill for Senate committee study, why not the same for the elected House? Even better, and following the same logic, why will the Conservatives not break up the bill into separate pieces of legislation so we can not only study them individually at committee but we can actually vote on each part? Why will the Conservative members of Parliament not do their job? Why will they not allow the members of Parliament on the other side to do their job?

• (1455)

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, economic action plan 2012, which is the budget, is all about promoting jobs and growth and long-term prosperity in Canada. We are on a good track. We have almost 700,000 net new jobs in Canada since the end of the great recession in July 2009, but the world economic recovery is fragile. We need to move forward with the budget. That is why, just as every other year, there is a big budget bill in the spring and there will be another one in the fall. I look forward to full debate in this place and in committee, but it is all about jobs and growth. We need to remember that.

* * *

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today the Veterans Ombudsman released a report in which we learn that 60%

of Veterans Review and Appeal Board decisions reviewed by the Federal Court contained reversible errors of fact and law. He suggests that veterans are not getting the benefit of the doubt in these cases. Veterans deserve better.

Will the minister conduct a review of the entire appeal process, with a goal to provide our veterans with a fair, independent, non-partisan and professional appeal process? Will he do that?

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, every year 4,000 veterans are turning to the Veterans Review and Appeal Board on decisions that have been rendered by the department, with free legal assistance. I welcome the report of the ombudsman. I have instructed the tribunal to act upon those recommendations, and I am pleased to inform the House that the tribunal has put forward an action plan that it wishes to implement within the next 30 days.

* * *

[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, ever since the announcement was made with great fanfare that a committee would be set up to look into the issue of French in federally regulated workplaces, there has been nothing but silence.

An access to information request submitted by the QMI Agency showed that there is not much in the file, apart from one press release. Basically, the only thing we have seen is a parade of ministers from Quebec to make people believe that the Conservatives are paying some attention to the issue of French in the workplace.

Why has the minister still not set up his famous committee?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, French is an issue of critical importance that we take very seriously on this side of the House. That is why we are not going to rush into taking a hit-and-miss kind of approach, as suggested by the NDP, with bills that are written on the back of a napkin.

We have said we will be setting up the committee to assess whether there are in fact problems relating to the language of work in businesses that are subject to federal legislation. We are going to do it correctly and we are going to do it thoughtfully.

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I agree with the minister that these things should not be rushed, but at some point, they are going to have to start the process.

There was another document in the file. In fact, it was an email from a senior policy advisor in Industry Canada, who was asking, "Are you aware of this?" That was the end of it. That is the sum total of Conservative action on this issue.

Last October, the minister promised that the committee would be set up before Christmas. However, it is now May, we will soon be rising for the summer, and there is still no news.

Oral Questions

Why is the minister breaking his promise? Would it be because he wants to take French leave?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not know where my colleague opposite has found that I have made such promises or commitments, but I have never publicly committed to anything of the kind.

One thing is clear—and I repeat—it is out of the question to skirt around a process that is so crucial and important. That is why we are taking the time to set up this committee in a correct and thoughtful manner. Then when we are ready, we will announce it.

* * *

[English]

THE BUDGET

Mr. Mark Adler (York Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Finance.

While the NDP gets lobbied by its big union bosses and socialist friends for a return to reckless spending and increased punishing taxes, our Conservative government is focused on jobs, growth and long-term prosperity. Our plan is positive and forward-looking, while the NDP would take us back to a failed tax-and-spend big government model of decades past.

Would the Minister of Finance please explain what informed economists are saying about economic action plan 2012?

• (1500)

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): I certainly will, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the hard-working member for York Centre for the question.

Canada's leading economists have lauded economic action plan 2012. Patricia Croft, the economist, said, “[Budget 2012’s] initiatives in the job front and addressing the demographic challenge.... In both regards I’d have to give the budget probably an ‘A’.... In a global context, I think Canada is in a fabulous position”.

Avery Shenfeld, chief economist, CIBC, said budget 2012 “... makes sense in a world economy that is still not what we would like it to be.... Relative to what anybody else is doing, we still”—

The Speaker: Order, please.

The hon. member for Markham—Unionville.

* * *

CANADA MORTGAGE AND HOUSING CORPORATION

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Mondragon housing co-op in Brampton is trying to be a responsible steward of its property.

It is trying to refinance its mortgage so that it can do needed capital repairs, but CMHC is blocking it, charging the co-operative 19 times the normal private sector rate to break its mortgage.

Will the minister instruct CMHC to behave in a reasonable manner so that Mondragon and other co-ops can refinance and perform needed repairs?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the facts are that, in order to access low-interest mortgages from CMHC through the crown borrowing framework, the social housing organizations signed closed mortgages at government rates that were significantly less at the time than private sector mortgages.

When the mortgages come up for renewal, they have every right and every freedom to go and pursue financing from other sources at today's better rates.

* * *

[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle (Rivière-du-Nord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of National Defence has decided to close the Bécancour sea cadet camp, the only francophone camp of its kind in Canada. This camp plays a critical role in creating the next francophone generation of the Canadian Forces and produces significant economic spinoffs throughout the region.

Why did the minister dismiss the importance of this camp for francophone youth who want the sea cadet experience in their own language? Why close the only francophone camp in Canada?

[English]

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there will be as many or more cadets attending camp this summer.

We have ensured that we continue that support for this important program, the best youth development program that we have in Canada today. We continue to support our cadets, both French and English, as they enjoy this important experience.

I had the pleasure of spending some time with them this weekend at the Battle of the Atlantic commemoration. I could not be more proud of the work that our young Canadians in the cadet corps are doing across the country.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Ron Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in these challenging times for the global economy, our Conservative government remains squarely focused on what matters to Canadians.

A free trade agreement with the European Union is expected to add 80,000 new jobs to our economy. That is like an additional \$1,000 in the pocket of every family in the country.

Can the hard-working Minister of International Trade share with the House how our government's pro-trade plan is creating jobs, economic growth and long-term prosperity for Canadians from coast to coast to coast?

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Kelowna—Lake Country for that excellent question and also for his great work on the trade committee.

It is clear that a free trade agreement with the EU will bring significant benefits to every single region of our country. Our government rejects the pessimism of the NDP and its anti-trade allies. They propose a little Canada and want us to hide behind protectionist walls.

Our economy depends on an expansive and global view of Canada, and that is why our government is committed to an ambitious pro-trade plan that will strengthen our ties with the European Union and with the rest of the world.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if we have to trust those people over there, then we are not out of the woods.

While millions of dollars are being spent on recreating the War of 1812, this government, including that minister, has decided to declare war on archivists. Cuts are being made to hundreds of small museums because the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages has chosen to make cuts to the National Archival Development Program.

Towns and cities everywhere will not have enough money to protect their historical documents—small churches, small libraries, everywhere, and that will have an impact on us. At the end of the day, these cuts are threatening the very wealth and diversity of heritage in our communities.

Why is the government so doggedly attacking our collective wealth—

• (1505)

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages.

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is no such attack. Library and Archives Canada will certainly be able to continue meeting its commitments by using new technologies and other means, and those methods will be used by museums across the country.

[English]

Our government is investing more than ever before in terms of our national museums, small museums across the country. Library and Archives Canada is doing a fantastic job of digitizing things, working with smaller libraries, working with collections and archivists around the country to make sure that more of the collection is available to more Canadians than ever before, at lower cost.

They are getting the job done, and we are working well together.

Speaker's Ruling

[Translation]

PARKS CANADA

Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, after being shaken by the budget cuts in 2010, Parks Canada's Quebec Service Centre, which houses archeological and artifact restoration services, is now having to close its doors because of the latest federal budget cuts.

This is disastrous for Quebec's heritage. Not only will highly skilled workers lose their jobs, but thousands of items in Parks Canada's collection, including artifacts dating from the founding of Quebec City, will be sent to Ottawa.

How can the government justify these job losses and the fact that valuable heritage artifacts connected with Quebec's history are being sent to Ontario or elsewhere in Canada?

[English]

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Parks Canada, like all other agencies and departments across government, is doing its part to address deficit reduction. Certainly our government has proven its commitment to the national parks system. In fact, no other government has done more to protect our natural spaces and our history and our historic sites than any government before us. We will continue to do that, and Parks Canada will continue to maintain programs and services across parks and sites, as we have done in the past.

The Speaker: That concludes question period for today.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

NATIONAL DEFENCE

The Speaker: I am now prepared to rule on the question of privilege raised on April 5, 2012, by the member for Toronto Centre about statements made by the Prime Minister, the Minister of National Defence, the Minister of Public Works and Government Services and the Associate Minister of National Defence, regarding the proposed acquisition of F-35 fighter jets.

[Translation]

I would like to thank the hon. member for having raised this matter, as well as the hon. Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, the House Leader of the Official Opposition, and the hon. members for Richmond—Arthabaska, Scarborough—Guildwood, Malpeque, and Saanich—Gulf Islands for their comments.

[English]

In raising this question of privilege, the member for Toronto Centre contended that an opinion attributed to two government departments in chapter 2 of the Auditor General's spring 2012 report to Parliament was at variance with statements the Prime Minister and certain ministers have made to the House on the same matter, namely that the government accepts all the recommendations and conclusions in the Auditor General's report. The part of the report that is in question reads as follows:

...National Defence and Public Works and Government Services Canada disagree with the conclusions set out in paragraphs 2.80 and 2.81.

Speaker's Ruling

Based on this, the member for Toronto Centre claimed that the Prime Minister and the Minister of National Defence and the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, as well as the Associate Minister of National Defence, had presented “two completely different and contradictory versions of reality” to the House. Noting that it is a fundamental obligation of the government to tell the House the truth, the member stated that the government seemed to be attempting to deliberately confuse the House.

[*Translation*]

With respect to the cost projections of the F-35 fighter jets, the hon. member for Toronto Centre also claimed that, if the government does indeed fully accept all of the Auditor General's conclusions and recommendations, then it is, in fact, agreeing with the Auditor General's assessment that “some costs were not fully provided to parliamentarians” and thus that Parliament had been misled. He went further, alleging that ministers were aware of the facts and thus knew that what they were saying in the House was not true. In reply, the government House leader explained that the departmental responses to the Auditor General's conclusions were those of the departmental officials, rather than the government itself. He said, “The position of the government is not the position taken by the officials in those departments.”

[*English*]

The charges being levelled against the Prime Minister and three ministers are serious. They go to the very essence of the need for clarity in our proceedings and the need to ensure that information provided to the House by the government is such that the ability of members to carry out their duty of holding the government to account is not diminished or impeded.

The issue of ministerial responsibility and accountability has also been raised by several members. The Chair would like to set aside this aspect of the matter immediately. As all members know, constitutional issues of this nature are not matters for parliamentary procedure, and they are well beyond the range of matters the Speaker can be asked to rule upon.

In reviewing the other arguments being advanced, it would seem that the Chair is being asked to ascertain whether what was said in the House was truthful. However, I must remind members that in such circumstances the Chair's role is clear and indeed very limited.

In *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, Second Edition, at page 510 it states:

The Speaker, however, is not responsible for the quality or content of replies to questions. In most instances, when a point of order or a question of privilege has been raised in regard to a response to an oral question, the Speaker has ruled that the matter is a disagreement among Members over the facts surrounding the issue. As such, these matters are more a question of debate and do not constitute a breach of the rules or of privilege.

• (1510)

[*Translation*]

There are in addition many relevant rulings from my predecessor Speaker Milliken, and I will quote from several of them. The first, from January 31, 2008, is found at pages 2434 and 2435 of *Debates*. In it, he stated:

Any dispute regarding the accuracy or appropriateness of a minister's response to an oral question is a matter of debate; it is not a matter for the Speaker to judge. The

same holds true with respect to the breadth of a minister's answer to a question in the House: this is not for the Speaker to determine.

[*English*]

Again on February 26, 2004, at page 1076 of *Debates*, he confirmed:

As hon. members know, it is not the Speaker's role to adjudicate on matters of fact. This is something on which the House itself can form an opinion during debate.

The member for Toronto Centre himself acknowledged this parliamentary convention when he said, “While it is not for the Speaker to determine what is fact”.

[*Translation*]

So what then are the parameters of the Speaker's role when faced with such allegations?

Speaker Milliken summed it up quite succinctly on April 21, 2005, when he said at page 5412 of *Debates*:

In the present case, I must determine whether the minister's responses in any way impeded members in the performance of their parliamentary duties and whether the remarks were intentionally misleading—

Then, on January 31, 2008, Speaker Milliken again had cause to state, at page 2435 of *Debates*:

As hon. members know, before finding a prima facie breach of privilege in situations such as these, the Speaker must be convinced that deliberately misleading statements were made to the House.

[*English*]

It has become accepted practice in this House that the following elements have to be established when it is alleged that a member is in contempt for deliberately misleading the House: one, it must be proven that the statement was misleading; two, it must be established that the member making the statement knew at the time that the statement was incorrect; and three, that in making the statement, the member intended to mislead the House.

[*Translation*]

It is with this very high threshold in mind that I have carefully reviewed all the interventions on this matter, as well as statements made to the House and replies given during oral questions by the Prime Minister and the various cabinet ministers involved.

[*English*]

With regard to the first argument advanced by the member for Toronto Centre, the Chair has difficulty accepting the view that because ministers are stating that they accept the findings and agree with the conclusions of the Auditor General, which include, in part, a statement written by the Auditor General relating that two departments disagree with him, that this in and of itself is evidence that these same ministers have deliberately misled the House and intended, in doing so, to impede members in the performance of their duties.

Routine Proceedings

What the Chair has before it is a statement by the government House leader that, having taken into account the findings of the Auditor General, the government has decided that it rejects the position previously taken by officials as conveyed in the report. As I pointed out earlier, the minister has stated rather starkly that “the position of the government is not the position taken by the officials in those departments”. Accordingly, with respect to this aspect of the question, the Chair cannot find grounds for a prima facie finding of privilege.

The second argument made by the member for Toronto Centre was that because the government agreed with the Auditor General's assessment that “Some costs were not fully provided to parliamentarians”, this meant that the House was misled. He further claimed “...for a long time, the members of the executive council knew that what they were saying in the House of Commons was not true”.

In looking at this aspect of the question, the Chair must return to the words of the Auditor General himself, whose report states categorically in paragraph 2.80 that “Some costs were not fully provided to parliamentarians”. However, let us not forget the very high threshold required before there can be a finding of prima facie privilege. As I said a moment ago, it must be clearly established that in making the statement complained of, the member in question knew it was incorrect and intended to mislead the House in making it.

[Translation]

It is relevant to note, in reference to this latter point, that the Auditor General also says, in the very same paragraph of his report, and here I am repeating a passage the member for Toronto Centre himself read to the House:

Problems relating to development of the F-35 were not fully communicated to decision makers—meaning ministers—and risks presented to decision makers did not reflect the problems the JSF program was experiencing at the time. Full life-cycle costs were understated in the estimates provided to support the government's 2010 decision to buy the F-35.

• (1515)

[English]

Obviously, the Auditor General has raised concerns about the information provided. He is pointing out that in his opinion less than complete information was provided to ministers and to members.

On this point, drawing from a somewhat analogous case from 2004 found in *Debates* at page 1047 in reference to statements contained in a report of the Auditor General indicating that Parliament had been “misinformed” and “bypassed”, Speaker Milliken pointed out that no evidence had been produced to show that “departmental officials deliberately intended to deceive their superiors and so obstruct hon. members in the performance of their duties”.

Not only has the government House leader stated that the government agrees with the Auditor General in this respect, the minister has gone even further stating:

—as a government, as ministers, as a cabinet, we have a right and an expectation that the advice we receive is something on which we can rely. This is something that, in this case, the Auditor General made some findings on. We happen to agree with those findings in the end.

[Translation]

So, ultimately, the Chair has before it two clear statements: the first contained in the report of the Auditor General that some costs were not fully provided to ministers and members; and the second, by the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons accepting the conclusions of the Auditor General.

[English]

In my view, no clear evidence has been presented beyond this and, thus, the Chair has no choice but to conclude that it cannot find that ministers knew or believed that what they were telling the House was not true or that it was intended to be misleading. In other words, the criteria of demonstrating that ministers knew their statements to the House were incorrect and that they intended to mislead the House, have not been met.

Accordingly, bound as I am by the very narrow parameters that apply in these situations, and without any evidence that the House was deliberately misled, I cannot arrive at a finding of prima facie privilege in this case.

The House will be aware, however, that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts has, as part of its ongoing mandate, the responsibility to review and report on all reports to the Auditor General. The House knows that the committee is seized of the report that has given rise to this question of privilege and is at present proceeding with its examination of the report.

I remind the House that a determination that a breach of privilege is not prima facie at this time in no way interferes with the right of any hon. member to raise a new question of privilege should the committee arrive at findings that shed new light on this matter, or should other pertinent information become available.

[Translation]

I thank members for their attention.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

TREATIES

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the treaties entitled, “Amendment to the Articles of Agreement of the International Monetary Fund on the Reform of the Executive Board”, adopted by the Board of Governors on 15 December, 2010 and “Protocol Amending the Agreement on Government Procurement”, adopted at Geneva on March 30 by the parties to the World Trade Organization Agreement on Government Procurement.

An explanatory memorandum is included with each treaty.

*Routine Proceedings***GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS**

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 38(6) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to six petitions.

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Orders 104 and 114 I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 22nd report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding the membership of the committees of the House. If the House gives its consent, I intend to move concurrence in the 22nd report later today.

INDUSTRY, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology in relation to the study on e-commerce in Canada.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to present the NDP's supplementary recommendations with respect to the e-commerce report. The NDP believes that it is high time for the government to introduce a digital strategy that leaves no one behind and that makes it possible for all Canadians to participate in e-commerce no matter where they live or what their income.

We also wish to ensure that SMEs have the necessary knowledge to implement e-commerce and for consumers to be able to use it with ease. Our report also contains recommendations on regulating electronic and mobile payments, and ensuring that transactions are fair and transparent.

We also developed recommendations that take into account the cost of processing payments, which is prohibitive and therefore continues to undermine competitiveness. The last issue addressed by our recommendations is that of security and the digital culture.

* * *

• (1520)

[*English*]**NITRATE REDUCTION ACT**

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-421, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (nitrate reduction).

She said: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member from Davenport for seconding this bill.

Today it is my privilege to table a bill that is the product of a contest entitled "Create Your Canada", which was designed to engage young people in the political process. I want to thank all of those who entered. I want to thank the judges, who were the staff at

the Nanaimo Youth Services Association, who reviewed submissions and selected this bill.

This is an act introduced to maintain nitrate levels below the 2.9 milligram per litre in watercourses to protect fish, amphibians and their habitats. This would be achieved by providing tax incentives to farmers and other landowners who set aside a section of land around watercourses. This land will act as a vegetative buffer, naturally decreasing the amount that enters the water.

As the students noted, we have some of the best water quality in the world. The students wanted to develop measures to both protect the waters and the farmers.

I congratulate Brody Cormons, who is in Ottawa with his mom, Cindy, and the team from NDSS, Seamas Finnerty, Jack Freeman, Emily Jakobson, Naomi Jackson, Mei-San Lamoureux and Chris Tait. These students from Nanaimo—Cowichan decided to be active participants in our political process. I want to thank them very much for their interest and their hard work.

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

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the House gives its consent, I move that the 22nd report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs presented to the House earlier today, be concurred in.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

PETITIONS

BANKING SERVICES

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure today to table a petition from the residents of Campobello Island. It is a very good-sized petition for a community of just a few hundred households.

Residents there are calling for assistance in persuading a bank to reopen on their island. Currently residents of Campobello must drive an hour through the state of Maine to get to a Canadian bank. They are forced to make two border crossings in each direction. This is detrimental to the social and economic health of the island.

I encourage the Government of Canada to take any action possible to help the residents of Campobello Island in their legitimate quest for a local bank. It should be done so these islanders can receive the same services available to Canadian mainland communities of Campobello Island's size.

CANADA POST

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present to the House today.

The first one pertains to a Canada Post retail outlet in my riding, which may or may not be closing. We do not know. The corporation has sent out mixed messages. The members of my community are very concerned because a lot of small businesses rely on the post office. A lot of residents have relied on the post office for decades.

This is a petition I want to present from my constituents who want to see that post office remain open in the riding.

• (1525)

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the other petition I am presenting today is on the so-called lawful access legislation, Bill C-30, which the government has not brought back into the House.

We do not know where it is, but the people in my riding hope that when it does come back, it will have significant changes. One of the major changes needed is to the following. In the current configuration, telecommunications companies would be compelled to maintain people's private and personal information, and law enforcement agencies would be able to access that without a warrant. That greatly disturbs and concerns members of my riding.

PENSIONS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of many of my constituents, I would like to bring forward a petition in which they clearly indicate that people should be able to continue to have the option to retire at the age of 65, and that the government should not in any way diminish the importance and value of Canada's three major seniors' programs, OAS, GIS and CPP.

RAILWAY SERVICES

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the petitioners are asking that the Government of Canada do everything in its power to ensure that the rails between Pembroke and Mattawa remain in place. A great campaigner, Michael Stephens, has been leading this charge to get these petitions in place.

REPUBLIC OF FIJI ISLANDS

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present today.

The first is a continuing campaign by the 100,000-strong Canadian Fijian population that is calling for the establishment of a high commission or regular consulate in the Republic of Fiji Islands. They point out that Canadians of Fijian descent have very active travel, immigration, business and property interests, both in Fiji and in Canada. They point out that the United States, Australia, New Zealand and China all have embassies or high commissions in Fiji. The lack of these services for Canadians travelling in that region presents great difficulty.

I have heard people say the fact the Fiji has been suspended temporarily from the Commonwealth is a barrier to this. Of course, I note that other Commonwealth countries, like India, Australia and

Routine Proceedings

New Zealand, still have high commissions there, notwithstanding that fact.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition I would like to present is part of 55,000 signatures collected from people all over British Columbia, and in particular Vancouver Kingsway. They are concerned about Enbridge's proposed northern gateway project.

They point out that with the 40th anniversary of the moratorium on oil tankers in the central and northern coast of B.C. just having passed, they would like to see that portion of pristine coast protected now and for all future generations. They call on Parliament to legislate a ban on oil tankers in order to protect our coasts forever.

I would like to thank the young students at Windermere High School for their great work on this petition.

ABORTION

Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions of similar content from concerned Canadians, regarding the lack of any legislative restriction on abortion. They ask the House to remedy their concern as quickly as possible.

[*Translation*]

RADIO-CANADA/CBC

Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present today a petition signed by my constituents. I will read a couple lines of it.

We, the undersigned residents of Canada, draw the attention of the House of Commons to the following:

WHEREAS the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), as the national public broadcaster, plays an important role in reflecting Canada and its regions to national and regional audiences, while serving the special needs of those regions

WHEREAS, in our current media environment, public broadcasting is an essential promoter and defender of Canadian culture, in both French and English

WHEREAS Canadians should continue to have access to Canadian stories and Canadian content and media should provide vibrant and rewarding new avenues for expression by Canadian artists

WHEREAS Canada requires a broadcaster that reflects the different needs and circumstances of each official language community, including the particular needs and circumstances of English and French linguistic minorities

...

THEREFORE, we, the undersigned, call on the Government of Canada to maintain stable and predictable long-term core funding to the public broadcaster, including CBC Radio and Radio Canada, in support of their unique and crucial roles.

The Speaker: I simply want to remind hon. members that they are not allowed to read petitions in their entirety.

The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

41ST GENERAL ELECTION

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present two petitions.

Routine Proceedings

The first petition concerns election fraud. The petitioners, who are mainly from Thunder Bay, but also from places such as LaSalle, Quebec, and other cities in Ontario, are calling on the government to set up an independent inquiry to get at the truth. Canadians must have confidence in our electoral system.

• (1530)

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from residents of the Montreal area, as well as Dundas and Hamilton. They are calling upon the government to provide a full, fair, transparent and unbiased inquiry into the proposed pipeline and supertanker scheme on the coast of British Columbia.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 534, 542, 543, 544 and 550.

[Text]

Question No. 534—**Mr. François Pilon:**

With respect to the 2020 biodiversity targets adopted by the Parties in Nagoya: (a) which targets does Canada plan to meet; (b) what strategies will it implement to meet these targets; and (c) what timetable has the government set to implement each of these strategies?

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), in Nagoya in 2010, Canada worked with parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, CBD, to adopt global targets that were both ambitious and realistic. The CBD strategic plan is a non-binding flexible framework that parties are expected to adopt or adapt as appropriate at the national level. Canada is committed to doing its part to contribute to achieving the Aichi biodiversity targets.

Canada's domestic targets have not been finalized nor adopted yet. Over the past year, the government has been working with provinces and territories on a domestic adaptation of the Aichi targets as Canada's response to the CBD strategic plan. Canada has a biodiversity outcomes framework, approved by federal, provincial and territorial ministers in 2006, which is a logical framework for 2020 goals and targets.

The government is currently developing a proposal for strategic goals and 2020 targets and will be seeking input from key stakeholders in the next few months. The government plans to finalize the domestic targets in advance of the next Conference of the Parties to the CBD in October 2012.

With regard to (b), given the crosscutting nature of biodiversity, all jurisdictions and sectors of society have an important role to play. A number of strategies will continue to be important in helping Canada achieve its objectives in this area, including in meeting whatever new domestic new targets are established.

The Canadian biodiversity strategy, developed jointly by federal, provincial and territorial governments, is the blueprint for the

conservation and sustainable use of Canada's living resources. The biodiversity outcomes framework complements and builds on that work. As federal, provincial and territorial governments have shared responsibilities for managing biodiversity, continued co-operation is key. In addition, the federal government continues to work with provinces and territories in areas of mutual interest, including, for example, wildlife management, protected areas planning and strategies related to invasive alien species.

Ongoing delivery of relevant federal strategies, programs and legislation will be a core element of achieving Canada's biodiversity outcomes. The federal government took an important step in 2010 with cabinet approval of a new federal sustainable development strategy, FSIDS. Protecting nature is one of the central themes of the FSIDS. The strategy includes biodiversity targets that all federal departments will need to report against in their departmental sustainable development strategies. The federal commitments and actions through the FSIDS will support implementation of the Canadian biodiversity outcomes.

Many provinces, such as Ontario and Nova Scotia, have recently developed or updated their own biodiversity strategies. Similarly, a number of local governments are developing biodiversity strategies. Initiatives by aboriginal organizations, the private sector, non-governmental organizations and academia will also continue to contribute to results.

With regard to (c), it is expected that Canada's new domestic targets will be scoped within a 2020 timeframe, in line with the time period of the Aichi targets. The timetables to implement the complement of domestic strategies that will support achievement of the targets varies. However, Canada and other parties to the CBD are expected to report on domestic progress every four years, with the next national report to be submitted in 2014.

Question No. 542—**Hon. Hedy Fry:**

With respect to oil tankers on the Pacific coast that receive oil and oil products from the Westridge terminal and/or any other facility in Burnaby that loads oil and oil products onto tankers: (a) what permits are required for tankers to receive and ship oil and oil products from this facility; (b) which department issues and oversees such permits; and (c) what public consultation, if any, is undertaken prior to the issuance of such permits?

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, with regard to (a), (b) and (c), no regulatory permits are required for tankers to receive and ship oil and oil products from Westridge terminal. However, a licence to export the oil and oil products may be required, as set out in the National Energy Board Act and the associated National Energy Board Act Part VI (Oil and Gas) Regulations.

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 543—Ms. Judy Foote:**

With regard to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans' Fleet Separation and Owner/Operator policies: (a) will the government proceed with a policy change and, if so, when will a decision be made in this regard; (b) has the government conducted an analysis in the past relating to a possible change to the policies; (c) what steps has the government taken to consult fishers regarding the policies and when, before holding consultations did the government give notice of the consultations; (d) how many consultative submissions have there been from corporations with regard to the policies and how many have there been from independent fishers; (e) what (i) economic, (ii) social, (iii) cultural ramifications would result from a policy change; and (f) what (i) research, (ii) actions, (iii) investments has the government undertaken to develop a plan to change the Department of Fisheries and Oceans' Fleet Separation and Owner/Operator policies?

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a) and (b), while the department seeks to continuously improve commercial fisheries management and undertakes various analyses as part of its regular policy work, no decision has been made by the government to proceed with a policy change regarding Fisheries and Oceans Canada's, DFO's, fleet separation and owner/operator policies. Formal processes have been used in the past to review various policies; for example, in 1999 the Atlantic fisheries policy review, AFPR, was launched to propose a framework for managing east coast fisheries and build consensus around a renewed vision for the fishery. DFO also receives frequent requests from stakeholders for flexibility from various commercial fisheries management policies and management measures. As a matter of process, this often results in thorough analysis of existing policies to see where change may be needed to help improve economic outcomes. Subsequently, flexibilities such as licence stacking, licence combining, exemptions and other actions have been taken for the benefit of harvesters.

For the most recent round of consultations on commercial fisheries policies and management measures, the purpose of the consultations was threefold: to consult with stakeholders on conservation policies under the sustainable fisheries framework, to inform stakeholders about plans for long-term stability in fisheries and to seek stakeholder views on measures to provide opportunities for the industry to achieve greater economic prosperity. It was another step in the ongoing effort to continuously improve commercial fisheries management and provide greater opportunities for economic prosperity in Canada's fishing industry.

With regard to (c), Fisheries and Oceans Canada, DFO, developed a discussion document, "The Future of Canada's Commercial Fisheries", detailing the department's policy direction to modernize commercial fisheries management. DFO provided access to this document by posting it online, emailing it directly to various stakeholders and mailing it to aboriginal groups throughout Canada.

A two-pronged approach was developed to engage people in the discussion: face-to-face meetings and an online process. The full-day face-to-face meetings were held in each DFO administrative area over the course of January and February 2012. Invitations were sent out several weeks in advance of each respective meeting.

For the online component, email notifications were sent on January 12, 2012, to stakeholders in the commercial and processing sectors, as well as aboriginal groups, environmental non-govern-

mental organizations, economists, academics and industry associations in an attempt to engage a wide variety of views.

As the process progressed, the consultation period was extended to March 14, 2012, and additional meetings were held to engage with specific groups to hear their unique perspectives separate from the industry.

With regard to (d), during the consultative process DFO did not require participants to identify themselves as "corporations" or "independent fishers" when making a submission. The categories used were "aboriginal groups, academic, commercial, economist, ENGO, province/territory, DFO, other federal department, processing, recreational, other". These are not easily transferable to the categories highlighted in this particular question.

With regard to (e)(i), (e)(ii) and (e)(iii), the purpose of the consultation process was to seek feedback from stakeholders on the entire fisheries management regime. This approach was taken so as to not restrict what stakeholders could comment on concerning their experiences with the current management practices.

With regard to (f)(i), (f)(ii) and (f)(iii), as indicated in the answer to (a), the department undertakes policy research and analysis work on a regular basis to improve the fisheries management regime in Canada.

Question No. 544—Mr. Scott Simms:

With regard to the proposed Muskrat Falls hydro-electric development: (a) who conducted the economic analysis of the project for or on behalf of the government; (b) when was this analysis (i) started, (ii) completed, (iii) submitted to the government; (c) has the analysis been publicly released; (d) if the analysis has not been publicly released, (i) why not, (ii) when will it be publicly released; (e) if the analysis was conducted on behalf of the government by a third party, (i) who conducted it, (ii) on behalf of which department or agency was it conducted, (iii) what was the total cost of the analysis, (iv) was the contract for the analysis awarded on the basis of competitive bid or was it sole-sourced; and (f) what were the risks and uncertainties identified in the course of the analysis?

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), the economic analysis was undertaken by Natural Resources Canada.

With regard to (b)(i) and (b)(ii), the economic analysis began on September 29, 2011 and was completed on January 25, 2012. With regard to (b)(iii), the report on the economic analysis was submitted to the government on March 9, 2012.

With regard to (c), yes, the economic analysis can be found at the following link: <http://www.nrcan.gc.ca/media-room/news-release/2012/31/6064>.

Part (d) is not applicable, as the economic analysis has been publicly released.

Part (e) is not applicable, as the economic analysis was not conducted by a third party.

Government Orders

With regard to (f), the risks and uncertainties are discussed in the report. Briefly, they relate to the forecast assumptions of oil prices, capital and operating costs of various supply options; the drivers of future demand of Newfoundland and Labrador, including population, economic activity, technological change, consumer tastes; and opportunities for future electricity exports from the project.

Question No. 550—**Ms. Joyce Murray:**

With regard to the 2011 General Election, for every federal electoral district in British Columbia and for the province of British Columbia as a whole: (a) how many contacts has Elections Canada received, including all contacts lodged directly with Elections Canada, forwarded by returning officers or from any other source, of (i) repetitive, late-evening, bizarre, or rude phone calls, (ii) misdirections to wrong polling station addresses; (b) how many of (a) were received (i) during the writ period, (ii) in the week following the general election, (iii) since then; (c) according to the contacts Elections Canada has received, how many of (a) indicated they were from (i) the Conservative Party of Canada, (ii) the Liberal Party of Canada, (iii) the New Democratic Party of Canada; and (d) how many late voter registration papers were approved in British Columbia by a returning officer without the voter's current or previous address appearing on the voter registration form?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Chief Electoral Officer appeared before the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs on March 29, 2012, in regard to the allegations of wrongdoing during the 41st general election.

During his appearance, the Chief Electoral Officer indicated that Elections Canada received approximately 70 complaints during or immediately after the election, alleging various forms of improper telephone communications. The Chief Electoral Officer further indicated that close to 40,000 people have since contacted Elections Canada to express concerns. Of these contacts, over 800 were complaints alleging specific occurrences of improper or fraudulent calls across the country. As indicated by the Chief Electoral Officer during his appearance, providing further details on the complaints would risk interfering with the confidentiality and integrity of the Commissioner of Canada Elections' ongoing investigation. Therefore, consistent with the spirit of the Access to Information Act, which recognizes the importance of preserving the confidentiality of the Commissioner's investigation, Elections Canada is not in a position at the present time to provide additional information, including information specific to the Province of British Columbia.

* * *

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if Questions Nos. 533 and 551 could be made orders for returns, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 533—**Ms. Jean Crowder:**

With regard to the Market Basket Measure: (a) which government department is responsible for deciding how it will be calculated; (b) what changes were made to the calculation of shelter costs within the past three years; (c) who made the decision to change the calculation of shelter costs; (d) who was consulted on the decision to change the calculation of shelter costs; (e) what kind of evaluation was performed on

the new calculation of shelter costs to ensure that it still represented a reasonable measure of the actual costs of housing; (f) when will the government review the shelter cost calculation again; and (g) what will be the process for reviewing the shelter cost?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 551—**Ms. Joyce Murray:**

With regard to the Centenaries Program funded under the program authority of Western Economic Diversification (WD) and delivered by WD and Canadian Heritage: (a) what is the purpose, cost, and timeframe of all current, ongoing, or completed (i) programs, (ii) commitments, (iii) agreements, (iv) expenditures to commemorate the 100th anniversaries of the provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan, including, but not limited to, capital legacy projects as well as commemorative and celebratory events or any projects or programs transferred at any point to other departments for implementation; (b) what is the (i) source, (ii) partner, (iii) commitment, (iv) value, (v) timeframe of all funds leveraged from other funding sources in support of (a); (c) how did the government measure the success, effectiveness, and efficiency of all projects, programs, commitments, agreements, expenditures, and timeframes referred to in (a) and (b); and (d) what steps has WD taken to ensure that recommendation number one of the March 2010 Evaluation of the Centenaries Program, which is that "the department should ensure its corporate database captures relevant project recommendations and financial information in a timely manner," be implemented?

(Return tabled)

[English]

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Mr. Speaker, I ask that the remaining questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

JOBS, GROWTH AND LONG-TERM PROSPERITY ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-38, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 29, 2012 and other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise on behalf of my constituents in Gatineau, but I am not proud to rise on Bill C-38, which should be extremely important because of what the budget contains. It is a huge document. The only bill I have ever seen that was bigger was Bill C-10, which was quite lengthy.

Bill C-38 is a hefty bill containing 753 clauses, only 51 of which have to do with taxes. The other 702 clauses set out a new way of governing. If that is not doing a bad job, I do not know what it is. That may be why the people of Gatineau are so fed up with this government.

Government Orders

Not a day goes by when I do not receive tons of messages via email, Facebook and Twitter from people in Gatineau who are fed up with the way the government does things: always acting without any transparency, in secret, without considering whether what they are doing makes sense or debating with the opposition to try to make the best laws here in Canada, and always trying to pull a fast one in big bills like this one.

The Conservatives are lucky to be in the majority with their big 39% of the vote because otherwise this bill would likely cause the same reaction as in 2008 when the Conservatives tried to slip into the economic and fiscal update two politically explosive measures, which had never been debated before: the abolition of public financing of parties and of the right to strike in the federal public service. It seems as though the Conservatives were not put off by the spontaneous reaction of the Canadian public on that occasion. The Conservatives do not give two hoots and believe that they have the majority with their impressive 39%, and they are trying to pull the same stunt yet again.

I certainly will not be encouraging the people in my riding of Gatineau to like this government any more than they do. They already tell me every day that they are not really happy with the government and that they are very much looking forward to 2015.

That being said, when you consider the overall impact of Bill C-38, it is enough to give you shivers down the spine. Moreover, I would ask the Conservative members to do more than simply rashly and blindly do what the first and second rows tell them to do. Indeed, they will have to explain in their respective ridings why particular ways of doing things have been instituted because Bill C-38 is going to affect a number of issues that are extremely important to Canadians.

By the way, for those who are not already aware of it, our debate is still subject to what I call a gag order. The government likes to call it a limited time for debate and boasts that it has allocated four long days for debate. The government has told us that the member who was finance critic before the end of the leadership race, the member for Burnaby—New Westminster, has already used up all the available hours.

But the fact is that it was not a filibuster. It was simply a demonstration of the fact that we used the only time the government allocated to us, whereas normally in this House members are given an opportunity to express themselves, not necessarily to their hearts content, but in keeping with the principles of representation. I thought that we were here to represent our constituents, but that does not seem to be the case. I consider myself lucky to be one of the chosen few who will be able to rise during the couple of days that the glorious Conservative government has allocated to us to speak about such an important bill.

If I were to put on my justice critic hat, I would say that there is even a chapter that applies to this in Bill C-38. I would not have a clue what it is doing there. Perhaps it is for economic, budgetary or other reasons? Not at all.

• (1535)

It would amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act to eliminate the requirement of a hearing for certain reviews.

When you read this kind of thing in a budget implementation act, in Bill C-38, you wonder whether someone has made a mistake. You look at the printed pages and the computer screen in order to see whether some other sections or some other legislation has been mixed in with it. But no, this is really what Bill C-38, the budget implementation act, says.

In fact, it announces plans to review the Corrections and Conditional Release Act and the Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act. Bill C-38 also talks about implementing the Framework Agreement on Integrated Cross-Border Maritime Law Enforcement Operations between the Government of Canada and the Government of the United States of America.

Just by themselves, these are all things that could take a some time to study and to determine whether this procedure is correct and in line with Canada's rules of law and natural justice.

Unfortunately, once again they are using the sledgehammers on us, just to satisfy their ideology that aims at reducing government with no other common thread than that of reducing for the sake of reducing and minimizing the things that they do not believe in. There will be changes to old age security, employment insurance and the Canada pension plan.

The people watching us know that we have talked a great deal about increasing the retirement age from 65 to 67, something that makes many people feel insecure, even those who are already in that age category and who will not necessarily be affected by the change. These people are well aware that if the government is now able to do this to the generation that is coming up behind them, nothing will prevent it from saying anything, any time, anyhow, and from changing the things on which they were once able to rely.

There is nothing that is certain in life any more, and this is perhaps the message I am sending to the people who are watching, and particularly to the voters in my riding who sent me here with 62% of the vote, unlike the Conservatives who received 39%, and who are pulling out their hair at hearing it said so often that it does not make sense. Is there anything that is untouchable in the opinion of this government? Are there rights that are not rights?

Another example is the Fair Wages and Hours of Labour Act, which is being repealed. In Bill C-38, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 29, 2012 and other measures, the government has decided that the Fair Wages and Hours of Labour Act will be repealed. This act was created in the 1930s to set wage standards and minimum hours of work for construction workers working on federally funded projects. Under the act, salaries are set in accordance with current industry norms, and hours are set according to provincial standards. Eliminating these minimum standards will allow employers to circumvent rates set by unions. Congratulations. This is yet another attack against those the government likes to call "big union bosses".

Government Orders

I have some news for them. Thanks to all of that and perhaps to certain “big union bosses” and certain battles that have been fought over the past decades, children of a certain age have been prohibited from working, because it simply did not make sense. Pregnant women are no longer forced to continue working if their work becomes too dangerous. The government must stop painting people who fight for legitimate causes as brainless criminals who are doing this simply to upset the public. What upsets the public is when they see bills like this one, bills of this size, into which the government tries to slip all kinds of measures, because it cannot do so through separate bills, since it is afraid of attracting too much attention.

I will leave it to my colleagues to give plenty of other examples of things that will have a serious impact, for the examples I have given are merely small ones.

On behalf of the people of Gatineau, I say shame on this government for introducing this bill, which demonstrates its clear contempt for democracy and contempt for the most fundamental rights of the people of Canada.

• (1540)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech, which was very interesting.

[English]

I completely agree with the criticisms that the member has made of the budget implementation bill. I appreciate the stand the official opposition is taking that key laws must be removed and not passed all as one.

However, I am wondering if the member could help me as well. I know the Minister of Finance cannot, as stated in the *House of Commons Practice and Procedure*, include measures that were not mentioned in advance of the budget. I cannot find any reference in the budget to destruction of fish habitat laws, to changing the Species at Risk Act to allow the National Energy Board to permit destruction of species at risk, nor do I find any reference to changing the Navigable Waters Protection Act. How is it that those could even be purported to be part of a budget 2012 measure?

[Translation]

Ms. Françoise Boivin: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her question. I would have to say that I do not have an intelligent explanation for what the Conservatives are doing. Many measures in the bill are absolutely incomprehensible.

She gave some examples, but there are many others. We wonder how the government could be in favour of putting an end to the Kyoto protocol.

Just imagine: a single sentence in Bill C-38, the budget implementation bill, announces that the Kyoto Protocol Implementation Act, Chapter 30 of the Statutes of Canada, 2007, is repealed, effectively killing the Kyoto protocol. That is what this government does after we entered into international agreements and gave our word as a country.

I want to tell the people who are watching—and I say this with no ill will, because it is the truth—to be careful when dealing with the Government of Canada, because its word is not worth very much.

With a government that is prepared to do something like that, it is any wonder that the budget said nothing about the measures my colleague mentioned, yet they showed up in Bill C-38, the budget implementation bill? Nothing in this House surprises me anymore. There are things that disappoint me every day, but nothing surprises me anymore.

[English]

Mr. Terence Young (Oakville, CPC): Madam Speaker, the members opposite are very concerned about the amount of time for debate on this bill, although it will have been the longest debate of any budget bill in 20 years. However, has the member complained to her own leader? Did she take a walk up to his office and ask her leader what happened? Why did one member of the NDP caucus get 13 hours to speak in this House to this bill when 78 members of that party could have taken 10 minutes each to speak to the bill? Did she raise that issue?

[Translation]

Ms. Françoise Boivin: Madam Speaker, it is important to understand that, when it comes to strategy, it is the Conservatives who assign time limits, something they do not seem to understand. It is not as though our colleague filibustered by himself for hours on end. Our time was allocated. Our message was the result of a collective effort. Moreover, I commend all my colleagues and our critic. It was the game that the Conservatives forced us to play, and in that respect, we came to the party. We sent a message, of which I am extremely proud. That message demonstrated that we are a solid, official opposition that spent the many hours that the member just referred to opposing the Conservative government's budget.

In previous parliaments, we were used to having the Liberal party as the official opposition. We did not hear a peep out of them. They talked furtively in the corridors but, when it came time to take action, they voted alongside the government and allowed everything to go through.

I am much happier to see my colleague rise. We were able to give him the information he required and everything that the people from our ridings had to say on the issue. So we are actually extremely proud. It was an effort. It was a message, a signal sent to the Conservatives, who do not listen to Canadians. It is true that they listen only to the 39%, their big majority. That is why they seem to be acting out. However, the fact is that they are the ones who are imposing time limits. And that is a violation of democracy.

• (1545)

[English]

Mr. Terence Young (Oakville, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to have the opportunity to speak to the budget implementation bill today.

My overall take may be from a somewhat different perspective than most members in this House. Most of the debate on this bill has been centred around what the bill does to deal with today's issues for Canadians who are working hard and trying to pay their bills, to thrive and to improve their lives across Canada today, adult people.

However, in my three years in this Parliament, I find we do not talk often enough about our young people, our children, teens and grandchildren. What about their future?

Government Orders

My generation's parents fought World War II. They suffered a great deal in that war, immeasurably, great losses and thousands of them never came back. However, since that time, the generation as a group has for the rest of their lives been the best off economically of any generation in history, something they earned the hard way.

That is not to say that they are all well off, as that is certainly not true, but Canada's seniors have benefits as a generation that they only dreamed of during the war. In their senior years, they have, as a group, the largest accumulation of wealth in history. Those who never earned enough to buy a home or save are the first generation in history with unlimited free health care. They have CPP, OAS and many are able to live in the many senior residences we have, supportive housing and long-term care facilities across Canada. They are living the longest as a result.

For those whose incomes are still low, this government has taken hundreds of thousands off the federal tax rolls altogether. We reduced the GST by 2% and other taxes in many ways, including the family caregiver tax credit in this budget, to help improve their quality of life. This is something Canadians should be very proud of. This is, for their generation, the fulfillment of the Canadian dream.

What about the next generation, the ones who are still working and raising families now? We have reduced their taxes in many ways, including for public transit users, homebuyers and those whose children have disabilities. We have increased health care funding by 6% every year since 2006. However, they are feeling squeezed. In fact, their total tax load, including provincial taxes and property taxes, and debtload is a big problem and this reflects on their children.

Family debt is now at an all-time high at a ratio of 1.51 to net income. Low interest rates and some pretty easy credit have proven attractive for consumers but in Ontario, where our federal government has lowered taxes in 140 ways, putting \$3,000 for the average family back into their pockets, the Ontario Liberals have been putting their hands into those pockets with the so-called health tax, the HST and the eco tax.

Every time the people of Ontario turn around, their paycheque shrinks and things cost more. That is a key reason that household debt is so high.

Our local bankers tell me that in my community of Oakville there are young couples carrying mortgages of up to \$500,000. This is a concern because in Ontario not only have electricity rates gone up in recent years, but they are poised to double in the next five years again, to pay billions of dollars to our wind generation machines, windmills that only produce electricity 20% of the time.

In Oakville, the Liberal caucus majority on the town council increases taxes every year with abandon, this year 6.3%, without a thought of how families will be able to pay it. With a \$15 billion deficit and \$242 billion debt, it is only a matter of time until Ontario's Liberal Premier Dalton McGuinty breaks his prime election promise for the third election in a row to not increase taxes and creates yet a new tax. It may be a tax on car license plates or a new provincial property tax or even a levy on Ontario's 400 series highways or he may just increase the HST. Premier dad will tell us, "It hurts me just as much as it hurts you." Not quite.

When interest rates begin to climb, as they surely will in the coming years, Ontario families could face the perfect storm: increased mortgage payments, double hydro costs, increased municipal taxes and Dalton McGuinty's new tax, all at the same time.

Ontario families and others across Canada are in a very precarious financial position. The Conservatives understand this. We committed to reduce the burden on families and this budget keeps that commitment to not increase taxes despite the recession.

● (1550)

After decades of electing governments that tell them they do not have to pay their bills because the next generation will do it for them, Greece, Spain, Portugal, Ireland, France and the U.K. have all increased taxes on people to balance their budgets. While that is going on in Europe, our taxes are not going up, and our budget will be balanced, as promised, by 2014-15. This is a tremendous accomplishment. Then we will begin to pay down debt that successive generations have created and would otherwise hand down to our children and grandchildren as we did before the recession from 2006-08. That was almost \$40 billion worth.

Deficits are really postponed taxes, taxes we leave to our children and grandchildren to pay. Without balancing our budget over the medium term, as this budget will do, we would be greedily taking what should be theirs.

How bad is the debt that we hand to our children? Well, I am going to be a grandfather for the first time in June. I am proud of many things in this country that my granddaughter will benefit from for her entire life, but not how previous generations took too much for themselves and left the bills for her to pay.

At a \$602 billion debt federally, and in Ontario another \$242 billion, we could present every baby born in Ontario with an invoice stating their personal share of that total debt: \$36,800. This is their gift from previous generations. Happy birthday.

However, this budget will put in place what we need to do to stop squandering our wealth on unnecessary interest rate charges over the long term, begin paying down debt in 2015 and leave our children and grandchildren a future where a huge portion of their earnings would not be confiscated to pay for our lifestyle. To do anything less would be more than irresponsible: it would be immoral.

This budget takes a big step in the right direction for a brilliant future for Canada by presenting a better future for our youth. All members should be supporting this budget.

Government Orders

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask my distinguished colleague a question. Since he spoke about Ontario families, I would like to talk to him about a situation caused by the budget and that is the closure of the Kapuskasing experimental farm.

This farm contributes to agricultural research and development. It helps farmers to be more productive, to develop the cattle industry, and to promote, for example, the use of more effective feed for cows. The research conducted at the farm also helps the residents of Abitibi—Témiscamingue. Furthermore, there is a partnership with the UQAT agri-food research centre in Notre-Dame-du-Nord.

I would like to know what the hon. member has against the farming families in Ontario and northern Quebec, who will be affected by this budget. They will end up being unable to develop their industry or to move forward. We are supposed to be stimulating the economy but, when an attempt is made to find tangible ways to help farmers be more productive, the government turns its back on them. What does the hon. member have against farmers in Ontario and Quebec?

[*English*]

Mr. Terence Young: Madam Speaker, I say to my friends on the opposite side that it is a fully private matter for one generation to spend all their savings within their own lifetime. It is like a bumper sticker that says, "I'm spending my children's inheritance". However, it is a completely different thing to spend that inheritance and then also leave a mortgage behind for the next generation to pay.

I know that members opposite will always find many good reasons to spend money now and leave it to be paid later, but if we continue to do that, we will end up like Greece, Spain and Portugal, unable to pay our bills or even to borrow money to increase our debt. It is not a responsible way to move forward.

• (1555)

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thought it was very interesting to hear the member say that one of the aims of his party is not to spend their children's inheritance, to cut the deficit, to pay down the debt and to create jobs.

I have been here so long that I am long in the tooth. However, I remember that 1993 a Liberal government came in vowing to do those things, and within three years we did. For 10 years after that we balanced the budget, and we left this new government with a \$13 billion surplus, a \$3 billion contingency fund and a debt that was being paid down.

Now we are hearing the same thing again. What took the Conservative government six years to get it? How did we get in this mess all over again?

Mr. Terence Young: Madam Speaker, if the member opposite wants to go back to 1993, she is missing everything that happened before 1993, going back to 1984, when the Conservatives took over after Liberal governments on and off from 1968.

I actually ran in the election in 1974, so I am very familiar with these issues.

Canada did not have significant debt—that is, a debt that was anywhere near out of control—until 1968, when Pierre Trudeau became Prime Minister of Canada, and he did not even take debt seriously. In fact, Pierre Trudeau told Canadians that debt does not matter because it is money that we owe to ourselves. That is when Canada's big deficits and big debt began.

When the Conservatives took over government in 1994, Canada's national debt was like the big snowball we see in the cartoons, going down a ski slope and getting bigger and bigger. When it was getting near the bottom was when the Conservatives became the government.

The interest rates, the interest costs on debt, were eating up a huge portion of the government's budget. It was a huge task to try to get that balanced. It takes years to show benefits.

In fact, the Conservative government at the time made the toughest decision. It was to introduce a value-added tax, the GST, which the member's party promised to get rid of and did not, because that value-added tax paid down the deficit. The Liberal Party of Canada took credit for that for years afterward.

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I find it amusing that the question I just asked did not get answered at all and that the 13 years from 1993 until 2006 were ignored.

I rise to speak against this so-called budget implementation bill. The government bundled many things into this bill. While I would have liked to stand to speak to the issues of getting rid of the deficit, jobs—sustainable jobs, not part-time jobs or jobs that will sunset in five years—and the problems facing us fiscally, I am forced to talk about everything else, which is sad. If the government really wanted to address the many things it purports to address in this bill, then it should have separated them. It should have allowed us to discuss them as separate entities in order to deal with some of the changes it is trying to make. However, this is a sneaky way of getting regulatory and public policy changes through on a whole bunch of things that no one can discuss.

I have heard people across the aisle say that a lot of time will be spent discussing this budget bill. This is the first time we have had a budget bill that contains absolutely everything and that needs a lot of time to be discussed. I am going to talk about some key areas that I think are important, since I only have 10 minutes. There are many areas, as I said, that could have been de-bundled. No one across the way is able to tell us why, when the Senate thought this was a good way to do it, that the House does not.

I want to talk about raising the age of qualification for OAS from 65 to 67. To date, in spite of many questions in the House, the government has provided no information or rationale for why this change is even necessary. All of the experts have said that our OAS system is sustainable. This is from a government that promised that it would not change pensions and is now tackling it through the back door.

Government Orders

The government, in this bill, which has nothing to do with anything, is abolishing the International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development, a non-partisan organization established by a Conservative government in 1988 to promote democracy abroad. Conservatives have been sabotaging this organization for many years and are now finally getting rid of it. However, this does not surprise me, because the government does not support democracy very well in Canada, so I suppose it does not feel it has to do it abroad.

I would also like to ask a question that I am hoping one of the Conservatives will answer in one of their speeches. Why is the President of the Treasury Board taking charge of the objectives of the School of Public Policy and the way the school is being handled? I did not know that the President of the Treasury Board was an academic, understood education or had degrees in education or public policy of any kind. It is very interesting to see these changes being made that have no rationale to them at all, except for power and control.

Here is another piece that shows us that the government, in terms of getting rid of the democracy international organization, is also trying to kill democracy in Canada. The Minister of Labour is dipping her fingers in labour agreements. There is a right in a democratic society to collective bargaining, but the minister now is going to intervene. She is going to be at the table virtually, if not in reality, making decisions, telling people what they should do and setting the stage so that collective agreements on bargaining rights are going to be completely skewed in this country. In fact, repealing fair wages and hours of labour in this bill would single out a group of workers who, the government tells us, happen to be only 7% of the labour force. Taking away the rights of fair wages and hours of labour from 7% of the population is discriminatory, no matter how small that group is.

Here is another piece of knocking down democracy in this country: the silencing of civil society under the CRA. It is going to look at whether groups, organizations or NGOs that are all under the heading of "special interest groups" as far as the government is concerned are now going to be able to advocate only 10% of the time. Just 10% of what they do will be advocacy.

• (1600)

However, many of these groups need to advocate. Why do we have civil society and NGOs if they are not going to be able to say what direction public policy should take within their sphere of influence and understanding and, in fact, criticize governments when they do not do the right thing? Silencing civil society is at the bottom of all of this.

I will now go into what I am most concerned about, which is what is happening with health. As the health critic, I am really concerned about the surreptitious cuts to health, which everyone seems to be denying every time we ask a question, about the surreptitious way of undermining this federation and by removing the cohesion that has gone on for so long and the way the federal government has dealt with the provinces in a mutually respectful manner negotiating transfer of payments.

Under health, the RCMP, interestingly enough, is delisted as an insured person. Why? It is because the government says that it now

can get a better quality of care delivered by the province. What does that say about the federal government's ability to deliver health care when it is the fifth largest deliverer of health care in this country? What does that say about how the government will deliver health care to first nations, Inuit and the armed forces?

We see how the government has been delivering care: cuts to suicide prevention and mental health programs for veterans and the armed forces; and cuts to youth, aboriginal and Inuit suicide programs. Those are things that make us wonder why the federal government is letting the RCMP go off and get care from the provinces when it is, as it calls it, a better standard of care.

We see cuts to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency of \$56 million and over 100 inspectors. The UN Special Rapporteur for the Right to Food will be on a fact finding mission to Canada. We are the first nation to be investigated by the UN special rapporteur. There was a time when the UN would come to Canada to look at best practices, not to investigate us. How have we changed in terms of the way the world views us?

The UN wants to come here to look into the missing and murdered aboriginal women. Again Canada has become, not a model to the world but a place where everyone has to come and investigate to see what happened to Canada.

We also want to talk about the cuts to public health. There are cuts to Inuit child and the general health, cuts to the aboriginal health human resources, cuts to the diabetes initiative program for aboriginal people, a 35% cut in the federal tobacco control strategy and an overall \$16 million cut from public health.

We learned some lessons or I had hoped the members across the way had learned some lessons because there were quite a few of them who were in the Harris Ontario government at the time when cuts to public health and privatization of inspection created Walkerton. People died. Are we going to wait until people die before the government wakes up and realizes that, if there are areas in which it is going to cut, it cannot cut essential programs and services because it will create severe catastrophes and tragedies?

I do not think any one in this House would stand and say that there should not be cuts. Of course, there need to be cuts but we need to be careful how we cut so that we do not harm Canadians.

I also want to say that we have health transfers being unilaterally decided upon by the federal government. This is the first time in the history of this country that has happened.

Leaving the provinces to fend for themselves and breaking up the federation in a way that it has never been broken before is the first step toward dismantling medicare.

Government Orders

The budget fails to create jobs for struggling middle-class Canadians or to deal with the economic disparities among individuals in this country and among regions. The Minister of Finance says that the budget bill is all about jobs and finances. He could have fooled me.

• (1605)

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened to the member's speech with some interest and I noted that she mentioned cuts to CFIA. In fact, we hired well over, I think, 156 or more inspectors, in addition to the ones who were there in the previous year, about 55 of whom are now being transferred to provincial responsibilities because of rationing and realignment to a more appropriate management style.

However, when the member expresses concerns about health cuts, negotiating with the provinces and territories was the way forward as she expressed it, if I can liberally paraphrase her, I wonder what she has to say about former finance minister Paul Martin of the Liberal Party slashing transfers to the provinces in his budgets, creating a health hole in provincial budgets that took decades to recover from? Was that negotiating with provincial partners and territories?

Hon. Hedy Fry: Madam Speaker, absolutely, whenever past governments, including Conservative governments, talked about transfers, they talked to the provinces and territories and negotiated. It was tough, difficult and raucous at times but it was the only way to make things work in this country.

Nobody is saying that cuts are not necessary. We are just saying that when cuts are made in areas of essential services, it creates a tragedy and a problem.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, when I was elected by the good people of Vancouver Kingsway in 2008 to come here, I was told by the people who operate this place and have a lot of experience here that our prime function as parliamentarians was to scrutinize and approve spending of government. The second thing I was told was that, as a democratic chamber in Canada, it was our responsibility to scrutinize legislation that comes before this House.

The Conservative government has developed a propensity for bringing in massive omnibus legislation in which it confuses and combines a budget with many other important pieces of legislation in one big bill, which makes proper scrutiny impossible in a democracy.

I have heard the talking points of my friends opposite. The Conservatives say that there is more time devoted to this budget than to any budget in 20 years. What they are not telling Canadians is that in the last 20 years there have not been these kinds of omnibus budgets presented in this House.

Obviously, taking the same amount of time to debate a normal budget and comparing it to the amount of time given to debate a budget that is over 400 pages long and guts parks, veterans services, women's health, environmental reviews and sees the closing of everything from consulates to immigration offices, is not a fair comparison.

Given that my hon. colleague has been in this House a fairly long time, could she tell us what she thinks about the degradation of

democracy and the ability of parliamentarians to properly scrutinize the budget bill as presented by the Conservative government?

• (1610)

Hon. Hedy Fry: Madam Speaker, my colleague has asked a very important question. It is something we are seeing here, which is why I chose to spend a little time talking about democracy in this country and the fact that Parliament is not an arm of government. Parliament is in itself one of the core institutions of democracy. Parliament has been disrespected. Parliament has been misled. Parliament has been denied any opportunity at committees to decide what it wants. Many things are in camera. That is the kind of thing that is going on.

There is a strategic reason for this. When one puts too many things in a bill, we will not be able to discuss them all. For instance, the pipeline and tanker issues that will affect my province of British Columbia will be controlled directly by the government with fast-forwarding of environmental assessments. It is a travesty and my province is concerned about this.

The government can then say later on that when members voted against the budget bill, they voted against all sorts of important things. There are some good things in this bill that we might like to talk about but do not have the opportunity to do it. That is the sadness of it all and how democracy has been undermined, and how the best interests of Canadians are not being served by this kind of strategy.

Mr. Daryl Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased and honoured to speak today to what I consider to be one of the most important budget documents, not only our country but for every citizen.

Canadians across the nation contribute so much during their lives. Moms and dads go to their jobs each and every day and yet still find the energy to raise healthy and happy families. We have seniors who have given so much to our communities and still do to this day. We have men and women in the armed forces who make tremendous sacrifices each and every day. In my riding, I have the Trenton Canadian Forces base and we have seen, sadly, the damage that can happen and the enormous sacrifices that are made on behalf of freedom. We all recognize that so many times over the years freedom is not free.

We have farmers who rise early every morning and who many times do not finish working until long after the sun goes down.

We have entrepreneurs, like our friends in the gallery here today, whose hopes, dreams and hard labour are invested in their shops and stores.

Canada is made up of hundreds of thousands of decent, honest people and a multitude of communities doing their best day after day. The one thing I believe they share is the belief that their hard work and dedication should be rewarded with a secure and worry free future.

There is an old African proverb that says, "For tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for today". I think most people in this House from both sides would agree with that philosophy.

Government Orders

I am confident that Bill C-38 is the bill that addresses Canada's needs not only for today but, more important, for tomorrow and certainly over the long run.

However, we must recognize the reality that the world economy is still fragile, particularly in Europe and in the United States. I can assure members that we are not unaware of the dangers that this fragility poses. However, through measures that we have already taken, we can proudly say that we have helped to protect Canada from the worst of this global recession.

Prudently and proactively, from 2006 to 2008, our government paid down over \$37 billion in debt. That brought our debt to its lowest level in a quarter of a century. Just under 700,000 jobs have been created since July 2009 in the workforce, which is the strongest job growth record in the G7. Canada's economy has expanded for nine of the last ten quarters. Our unemployment rate is well below that of the United States and that is the first time that has happened in more than three decades.

The World Economic Forum ranked Canada's banking system as the soundest in the world. There are nearly 200 countries in the world but we are ranked number one, which is most enviable. We have maintained that ranking for four consecutive years.

Forbes magazine ranked Canada number one in the world for opportunity and for businesses to locate, grow and create jobs. I think there is no doubt that Canada is in a strong and enviable position going forward.

It is crucial to understand what the budget would not do.

First, we are not raising taxes. I will quote John F. Kennedy from his annual budget message to Congress in 1963 where he said:

Lower rates of taxation will stimulate economic activity and so raise the levels of personal and corporate income as to yield within a few years an increased — not a reduced — flow of revenues to the federal government.

There is a clear consensus that higher taxes kill jobs and create less income. That is a reckless idea that only the opposition parties blissfully and blindly follow. Our policy of lower taxes has and will continue to make us more competitive and prosperous.

The second “not” is that we are not balancing our government's books by cutting transfers to seniors or other levels of government for health, education and social programs like the previous government. We will not balance our budget on the backs of the provinces and municipalities that would force taxes back onto the regular everyday taxpayers. There is only one taxpayer.

● (1615)

Regrettably, I only have a few minutes, so I will not have the opportunity to fully elaborate on all the things we are doing to strengthen the financial security of workers, businesses and families. However, I will take my remaining time to highlight just a few of the bold and significant steps we have taken in Bill C-38, which lays the foundation that focuses on the things that matter most to Canadians, increasing jobs and, certainly, maintaining economic growth.

How are we doing it? We are encouraging ownership, innovation and world-class research with over \$1.1 billion in significant investments for research and development, over \$500 million for venture capital, and support for increased public and private research

collaborations. There are measures in this budget to improve conditions for business investments by continuing to keep taxes low, measures such as extending the hiring credit for small business for an additional year, and I can tell members that in much of rural Canada this is a most welcome initiative.

We are investing in training and infrastructure and opportunity for Canadians by investing in programs that will help our youth, our Canadians with disabilities, aboriginals and workers over 50 get back into the workforce. We are reforming the EI system to promote the creation of jobs and remove the disincentive to work.

We are helping families and communities by assisting victims of crime, with a clear focus on the victim. We are improving water quality for first nations communities, investing \$150 million to support repairs and improvements to existing community facilities and, of course, improving the registered disability savings plan to help ensure the long-term security of children with severe disabilities.

We are looking ahead. We are ensuring that vital social programs and services are there for Canadians by making gradual and responsible adjustments to the old age security. I know a number of my colleagues on the other side bemoan our activities, but they are denying the facts. As an example, the average life expectancy of Canadians is on the rise. Baby boomers are already close to or at retirement. Meanwhile the birth rate has decreased. Clearly there are four working, taxpaying Canadians for every senior on a current basis. In 20 years, that will be down to two.

It has been estimated that the cost of old age security will grow by around \$70 billion in just under 20 years, if we take no action. That is why preventive measures are imperative. Our government will work to protect the retirements of current and future seniors by increasing the eligibility age of OAS from 65 to 67.

We are being proactive, as the change will not come into effect until 2023, and even then it will be phased in gradually. Of course, Canadians currently 54 years of age or older as of March 31, 2012, will not be affected at all by this change. This is timely, considered and responsible action that is needed to sustain OAS for future generations of seniors.

We are also bringing pension plans for public sector employees and parliamentarians back into line with those of Canadians who work in the private sector. We are supporting our seniors by continuing to invest in the new horizons for seniors program. This is a program that supports projects led or inspired by the seniors themselves who make a difference in the lives of others and in their communities.

I know in my riding of Prince Edward—Hastings, from one end to the other, seniors have embraced these opportunities to stay engaged, to stay active and of course to stay healthy.

Government Orders

We are looking after our environment by investing, as just one example, \$50 million alone for the protection of Canada's species at risk. We are creating more parks and new parks, the most ever in the history of our country. We are supporting the health of our lakes, by providing extended tax relief for clean energy generation equipment and, of course, by following through on our commitment to Cancun.

Economic action plan 2012 also demonstrates our government's strong support for my province of Ontario through record federal transfers, support for health care and education and other critical services. Totalling \$19.5 billion in 2012-13, the transfer support represents an increase of nearly \$8.4 billion or a 77% increase from the former Liberal government.

Yes, we are investing, but we are also saving. Our government's prudent plan to return to balanced budgets over the medium term is on track. Over the past two years, we have put in place targeted spending restraint measures and have reviewed government administrative and overhead costs. These actions have already delivered over \$0.5 billion in new savings, which are ongoing.

This budget is a balanced approach, and it is the pattern that I have commented briefly on today for long-term success, success for seniors as well as future retirees.

• (1620)

It is clear that the government is planning for tomorrow, and we are doing it today.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to put a number of facts to my hon. colleague for his comment.

First, he and other members of the government have said they do not believe it is fair to foist the economic problems of today on the generations of tomorrow. They have also commented that it is not prudent or fair to place those obligations on seniors, yet the government is going to raise the OAS retirement age from 65 to 67 for seniors in the future. My hon. colleague says that is necessary because of the demographics of the country, although the government has refused to increase the number of immigrants coming to the country. Also, the Parliamentary Budget Officer says it is not necessary because old age security is sustainable.

I wonder if my hon. colleague could comment on this particular fact. His government has cut \$12 billion in GST and a further \$10 billion, at least, in corporate income tax. Why is it cutting over \$22 billion of federal revenue, today, to give tax cuts to corporations, today, to be paid for by seniors who turn 65 in the future?

Mr. Daryl Kramp: Madam Speaker, let me just correct the hon. member first. He mentions a decline in the rate of immigration. The reality is that he is dead wrong. The largest amount of immigration we have had in the last 10 years in Canada has occurred during the role of this government. We are averaging 250,000 immigrants per year.

We understand how important that is. We are a country of immigrants. We are a country of immigration. There are challenges. The last thing we need to do is bring immigrants into the country who have tremendous qualifications but end up driving cabs. That is why we are changing the rules of the immigration standards and access, so that we can bring in people who are talented, people who

have job opportunities. We have 150,000 people wanting jobs, yet we have businesses across the country that cannot get staff. They cannot get people because we have a mismatch in the quality, talent, capacity and capability of our immigrants. Therefore, I beg to differ with the hon. member.

I certainly appreciated my time spent with the member in Asia. I think we understand the realities of the importance of immigration. We were so pleased to arrange for the approved destination status, which has proven to be such a benefit for Canada.

• (1625)

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to pick up on a couple of themes mentioned by the hon. member.

In his speech, he trumpeted how good the budget is for Ontario. I am from Prince Edward Island, and we are not feeling the love. The public service has been gutted. The head office of the Department of Veterans Affairs has been gutted, the district office of Veterans Affairs has been closed, the Canada employment and immigration processing centre has been closed and the Citizenship and Immigration Canada office has been closed.

I heard my colleague say that the budget will not pay off the deficit on the backs of the provinces and municipalities. Well, the increase in the OAS eligibility age does exactly that. It transfers the cost of supporting our poor senior citizens to the other levels of government.

He talks about not bringing down the debt on the backs of municipalities. We have a crumbling infrastructure. We now have infrastructure projects, including a well field in Prince Edward Island and a sewer separation project, which is only being funded by two levels of government while we wait for the feds.

My question to the hon. member is whether there is a place in this budget—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Prince Edward—Hastings, and there is less than a minute left.

Mr. Daryl Kramp: Madam Speaker, yes, there certainly is much room and many initiatives in the budget that will be helpful. The member mentioned infrastructure. I might just draw his attention to the fact that the federal government just completed the most successful long-range, all encompassing, intensive infrastructure program in the history of the country, and we partnered with the provinces and the municipalities. We created hundreds of thousands of jobs. We kept our unemployment level at certainly not an acceptable level by our standard, but in comparison to our competitors and other nations around the world, we stood out as number one.

To suggest that the government puts one province ahead of the other is not—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I am afraid the hon. member's time has elapsed.

Government Orders

[*Translation*]

Before resuming debate, it is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Davenport, Public Transit; the hon. member for Cape Breton—Canso, Employment; the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands, Government Communications.

Resuming debate. The hon. member for Sherbrooke.

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to speak to this bill on behalf of the people of Sherbrooke. I consider myself to be very lucky to be able to speak to the Conservative budget, because the Conservatives have once again allotted very little time for Parliament to discuss it. The government is showing unbelievable contempt for our institution and our democracy by limiting the right of Canadians' representatives to speak on such an important and imposing bill.

People everywhere are speaking out against this undemocratic practice. The Conservatives' argument to justify the countless time allocation motions to limit debate was that these matters had been discussed in previous Parliaments. That argument no longer holds water because we are talking about budget 2012 and a great number of measures that have never been discussed before, not even during the election campaign. There is no good reason to study this bill in record time, as we are doing today.

Bill C-38 is a massive omnibus bill that goes far beyond the scope of the budget. Tabling a bill with such a huge scope and such a tight deadline undermines the nature of Parliament. In fact, this massive bill of 421 pages does not contain only the measures set out in the budget, but also a number of changes that were not previously announced. At least a third of Bill C-38 aims at weakening environmental rules and protections. It is incredible and incomprehensible. It is enough to make us wonder whether they are so ashamed of the measures and the decisions they are making that they have to hide them in such a huge bill.

Canadians are not that gullible and, luckily, there is one party that is standing up for them every day in the House of Commons. I am happy to be able to speak on behalf of the citizens of Sherbrooke, and to defend their interests here, in the House of Commons, and to condemn this government that does not respect democracy.

Mr. François Choquette: Hear, hear!

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault: I would like to thank the member for Drummond for his applause.

The New Democrats believe that Parliament and government should be open and respectful. We believe it is shameful to try to introduce measures by stealth in Parliament, particularly measures that will make the government even less transparent. The 2012 budget contains reckless cuts in services on which Canadians depend, including the old-age security program, culture, transfers to the provinces, infrastructure programs and environmental assessments.

The Conservatives say that their budget focuses on job creation. However, they even admit themselves that this budget will lead to 19,200 job losses in the public service. I do not know if this is their

job creation plan, but clearly, it is not working. It is important to note here that the job losses in the public sector will inevitably lead to losses in the private sector; they are interrelated.

Consequently, we are strongly opposed to Bill C-38 because of its content, and also because of the very improper procedure being used. The NDP team will oppose the 2012 budget and its implementation act, unless the act is amended to focus on the priorities of Canadians, that is, creating high-quality jobs, protecting our environment, strengthening our health care system and improving retirement security for everyone.

Let us look at environmental assessment. Bill C-38 repeals the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act and replaces it with a new environmental assessment system designed to expedite the approval of major projects, including pipelines, and to gut the environmental protection rules. Bill C-38 increases the minister's discretionary power with regard to major pipeline projects. It gives cabinet the power to make decisions about major pipeline projects and allows the National Energy Board to authorize the construction of pipelines and power lines that cross navigable waters. In addition, it gives cabinet the power to veto a NEB decision and to approve a project previously turned down by the board. As I mentioned earlier, at least one-third of this bill is devoted strictly to environmental deregulation.

Bill C-38 also delegates the environmental assessment process to other authorities, including the provinces. With this bill, the government is once again offloading federal expenses onto other levels of government. It is not the first time we have seen this.

Bill C-38 repeals the Kyoto Protocol Implementation Act, which means that Canada will no longer be required to report its greenhouse gas emission levels. In this regard, just about everyone in Sherbrooke agrees: the Conservative government's decision is wrong-headed.

As for old age security, Bill C-38 amends the Old Age Security Act in order to implement the changes announced in the budget.

• (1630)

Although we support the measures to make registration for old age security and the guaranteed income supplement automatic and we support the voluntary deferral of benefits, we strongly oppose gradually increasing the age of eligibility from 65 to 67.

Several experts, including the Parliamentary Budget Officer and the federal government's chief actuary, have confirmed that the old age security program is sustainable. And yet the Conservatives want to balance their budget on the backs of our seniors. The Conservatives have run up the largest deficit ever recorded in our history. And then they want to tell our seniors that they are the one who will have to pay for it.

When did we hear about this measure in the election campaign? Never. They never mentioned the measure in the election campaign and now they are throwing it in our faces, taking us completely by surprise.

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As for transparency and accountability, the most important aspect is how they are reducing the Auditor General's oversight powers. Bill C-38 eliminates mandatory financial audits by the Auditor General for 12 agencies—yes, I said 12 agencies.

Bill C-38 dissolves the Public Appointments Commission. The elimination of this commission will significantly reduce the transparency of the government and the public appointment process, and will open the door to more political interference.

As far as culture is concerned, hundreds of millions of dollars in cuts will be made in phases to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation ending in 2014-2015. Telefilm and the National Film Board will also be affected.

In my riding, Radio-Canada Estrie contributes to our community by providing us with information in a diligent, professional and consistent manner. These draconian cuts make it hard for the people of Sherbrooke to be on top of local current events and to add their voices to the national and regional discourse. In Sherbrooke, we are proud to have a Radio-Canada bureau that delivers the region's news to us night after night. I will oppose any measure that might jeopardize its ability to do its work properly.

This budget is penalizing the general public. The Prime Minister can find money to build new prisons, buy fighter jets and provide gifts to corporations, but who will have to pay for all this and work an extra two years to subsidize these ideological expenses? The middle class and seniors, that is who. In light of this complete lack of leadership, I am very worried about the government's cuts that, once again, will hurt the public the most.

When it comes to communities, the budget has forgotten all about cities. It contains nothing for public transit, nothing for housing and nothing for immigrant settlement services. We have been advocating for a long time for more investments in municipal infrastructure in order to facilitate access to the region and to build the new Champlain Bridge. In fact, the budget cuts \$500,000 from amounts to be allocated to Jacques Cartier and Champlain Bridges Incorporated in 2013-14. It is obvious that the Conservatives do not care about the interests of our communities.

The government will have to address an important matter in my region. I am referring to the Sherbrooke airport. The announced reduction in infrastructure spending is not very encouraging. However, I will continue to defend this project and I hope that the government will be listening.

In stark contrast to the Conservatives, the NDP is determined to address the real priorities of Canadian families: jobs, health care, pensions and environmental protection.

We will be voting against the bill, because of its content and the way in which it has been presented.

I will close by stating that the people of Sherbrooke strongly oppose this bill. One month ago, I held a public consultation and asked my constituents what they thought of the budget. The main reaction was the fairly quick rejection of this budget, and I am here to make that point on their behalf. I hope that the government will not turn a deaf ear.

● (1635)

[*English*]

Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have not heard such anti-corporate rhetoric from anybody since the 1960s, but the NDP lives in the past when it talks about these corporations.

I have a specific question for my hon. friend. Given that many union members have their pension funds stuffed with investments from major Canadian energy and banking corporations, the kind of corporations that my hon. friend and his party detest, will he recommend to the union bosses that all union pension funds divest themselves of investments in Canadian corporations?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault: Madam Speaker, we are not against corporations—quite the opposite—but we are against excessively large tax credits and cuts. Now that the Conservatives have given so much money to companies that export jobs, they are turning around and telling seniors that they will have to wait two more years before they can retire.

It is kind of unbelievable for them to give everything to corporations and not ask for any accountability or even job creation in return. In fact, there have been job losses. Most of the time, corporations that have benefited from Conservative tax credits over the past six years and Liberal credits before that relocate jobs to other countries.

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Conservatives talk about tax cuts and the future in the same breath. However, cutting Environment Canada's budget, eviscerating environmental legislation, suppressing dissenting opinions and muzzling government scientists increases the risk of major environmental harm, which would be a high price for future generations to pay, would it not?

● (1640)

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his question.

Because I am a young member, when I study a bill that is so impressive and so important in relation to the future and the environment, among other things, it moves me greatly. When you are young and you make decisions, you think a lot about the future and about the consequences that those decisions will have in 20, 30 or even 50 years.

When reading this bill, I got the impression that it does not point to a very positive future. The government appears to be putting the environment at the bottom of its list of priorities, especially since it has backed out of the Kyoto protocol. I have many concerns about the future and about what will happen to our planet if we continue to be governed by a government that has such a backwards ideology in terms of the environment.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Sherbrooke for his very passionate words.

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He is a young person who is coping with real challenges that will lead to climate change. We need to hear about these things in this debate. Climate change is a fundamental issue, and there is nothing in the budget or in the budget implementation act about it or about the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. I would therefore like to thank this young member, who has a worthy vision of the country and of the planet.

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for her comments

It is indeed a very important issue for my generation. In the years to come, we will see more and more climate change. We are seeing it already today. It is a major issue for our generation and for everyone, in fact. We must take it seriously.

Not all the members on the government side are young people, but that is no reason to ignore this issue, to not think about their grandchildren. We must think about future generations. It is the best way to draft a bill. When the bill being drafted is the budget, thought must be given to its future consequences. If that is not taken into consideration, the bill will miss the mark completely.

[*English*]

Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to speak today about our government's priorities: jobs, growth and long-term prosperity. It is very appropriate after the recent comments of the leader of the NDP, who seems to want to pit one region of Canada against another, one industrial sector over another.

Over the weekend, the NDP leader chose to attack the natural resources sector and laid blame upon it for the effects of the global economic crisis on our manufacturing sector. Although his comments were ostensibly related to the oil sands, I would assume he was talking about all of Canada's natural resources sectors. I happen to represent a natural resources constituency. In Manitoba, forestry and agriculture are major industries and I take his comments as a direct attack on my constituents and communities.

This is in very sharp contrast to our government, which is focused on long-term prosperity. This has made Canada the envy of the world and the G8.

We are well-positioned to balance our budget in the medium term and become more competitive as we invest in infrastructure, science, innovation and tax reduction, while reducing barriers to trade. We have undertaken the most ambitious trade expansion plan in Canadian history and will continue with that. This is a government that has continuously lowered taxes. Since forming government, we have cut taxes 140 times for families, businesses and individuals.

Budget 2012 spends taxpayer dollars responsibly. I would like to quote Craig Alexander, chief economist of TD Economics, who said:

When combined, the various measures included in...budget [2012] are aimed at improving productivity and boosting private sector growth...In addition to being fiscally prudent in the medium-term, the government is taking action to pursue fiscally sound policies for the long run.

In terms of creating and protecting jobs, we will extend by one year the hiring tax credit for small business, a measure we know works to encourage businesses to hire more employees. In western world Manitoba where I am from, there are many small businesses

and manufacturers that export to the United States and around the world. I hope the NDP does not disregard the importance of these small business job creators, while their leader attacks the natural resources industry. What he and his party have to realize is that the natural resources industry supports many manufacturers that provide vital products for resource industries.

We are going to invest in upgrades to infrastructure such as maintaining safe rail service, renewing the Coast Guard fleet and improving facilities at our borders. We are increasing funding for skills training for students, older workers and Canadians with disabilities. Our government will also reform Canada's immigration system. It needs to be more efficient and better at meeting our country's labour market needs so the businesses that need workers can find them and new Canadians can succeed when they come to Canada.

I would like to take a minute to talk about our responsible natural resource development policies, which I very strongly support. Canada's natural resources sectors employed more than 760,000 across the country, many in my constituency. In fact, the mining and energy sectors alone represent 10% of the Canadian economy and 40% of exports, sectors that the leader of the NDP wants to see damaged and reduced. In the next 10 years, more than 500 new projects, representing over \$500 billion in new investments, will be proposed for Canada. The potential for job growth is simply enormous.

Since 2006, our government has been working to streamline the review process for major environmental projects. Our efforts have made a difference without any negative impact on the environment. It is very important to make a distinction between the environmental process and environmental outcomes. They are two very different things.

Currently, companies undertaking major projects must navigate a complex maze of regulatory requirements and processes, many of which have little to do with the environment, and approval processes are long and unpredictable. That is why our government is acting, in Canada's economic action plan 2012, with our plan for responsible resource development. The responsible resource development policy will streamline the review process for major economic projects and prevent long delays that kill potential jobs and add nothing to environmental improvement, I might add, and stall economic growth by putting valuable investment at risk.

As a young biologist back in the 1970s, I had the pleasure of working on the first environmental assessment in the Mackenzie Valley. A very thorough environmental assessment of the Mackenzie Valley environmental resources was done prior to the potential development of that particular pipeline.

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• (1645)

The pipeline did not happen. A similar review was undertaken again in the 1990s, doing exactly the same thing we did in the 1970s. Again, the pipeline did not happen. Had that pipeline been built in the late 1970s or early 1980s, gas would have been flowing from the Mackenzie Valley and thousands of much-needed jobs in impoverished rural communities would have been created. That is the problem with the environmental process. With the low prices for natural gas these days, one wonders whether that Mackenzie Valley pipeline will ever be built. More importantly, responsible resource development would create good, skilled, well-paying jobs in cities and communities across the country, especially in rural communities, the kind that I represent.

Going back to the Leader of the Opposition's comments over the weekend, when he said he wanted to internalize costs for the oil sands, it is that old thing, full-cost accounting, which has never been done. He also talked, in March, about a comprehensive cap and trade program. Interestingly, I wonder if he wants to internalize the costs for all natural resource industries across the country. Does this apply to forestry development? Does he want to see it for hydro development? Does it apply to hydro development in Quebec, for example? One does not know, but these are questions that need to be asked of the leader of the NDP.

Protecting our fisheries is very important. Our fish and fish-habitat protection rules would do just that. These changes would solidify our government's commitment to protect recreational, commercial and aboriginal fisheries and the habitat that supports them. We would adopt a sensible and practical approach to managing real and significant threats to fisheries and the habitat that supports them, while minimizing the restrictions on routine, everyday activities that have little or no impact on the productivity of Canada's fish stocks. Section 35 of the Fisheries Act, a definition of fish habitat, is extremely broad and almost all of Canada then becomes fish habitat. Then what do we do? We have a prime example right next door to us on Parliament Hill. There has been massive change in habitat in the Ottawa Valley with the city of Ottawa itself and the Rideau Canal, yet the Ottawa River is thriving. The fish community and the fish populations are very abundant. That is because of the inherent productivity of the ecosystem here in spite of all the changes that have occurred. Obviously those changes were within the bounds of ecosystem function. We have a thriving fish population in the Ottawa River and thriving human communities right beside it.

We have heard Canadians tell us about farmers being prevented from cleaning out their irrigation channels, and municipalities being delayed in repairing bridge supports, doing routine maintenance of drains and so on. That is because the existing rules lack common sense. The changes we are proposing would focus protection on recreational, commercial and aboriginal fisheries, the important ones, drawing a distinction between vital waterways that support Canada's fisheries and productive bodies of water like drainage ditches and irrigation canals. We would identify and manage real threats to fisheries. The minister would have new tools to establish new and clear accessible guidelines for Canadians to follow for projects in or near water. We would identify ecologically sensitive areas that require enhanced protection. Currently, all areas are treated indiscriminately under the law. As a fisheries biologist, I can tell

members that we would be able to implement these new regulations and improve, enhance and conserve fish populations.

The changes would also allow the government to enforce the conditions associated with Fisheries Act authorizations. At present, DFO cannot enforce the conditions on authorizations. We would align infractions under the Fisheries Act with the Environmental Enforcement Act which provides higher maximum penalties.

In terms of protecting Canada's environment, our bottom line is that Canadian families deserve the cleanest air, water and environment possible, again delivering on environmental results. It is the physics, chemistry and biology of the environment that are important here, not process. When one looks at what we have done for the environment, delivering results and spending billions of dollars on environmental improvement, it shows that we work. The NDP demands an environmental process that only makes lawyers rich. We Conservatives demand results and we deliver.

• (1650)

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Madam Speaker, I listened carefully to the speech given by the hon. member, who sits with me on the Standing Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development. His speech was a great disappointment to me, especially since he spoke about the Fisheries Act, which is going to be amended. We know that the amendment of this bill is an aberration and that the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans will not even be able to study it.

This bill attacks fish habitat in such a way that only fish that are valuable to humans will be protected. Nevertheless, all fish feed and live in an ecosystem. If we do not protect the fish that they eat or the ecosystem in which they live, how will we be able to protect any fish over the long term?

The change to this legislation is a total aberration. We are going back years—50 years even—in terms of environmental protection. And this is only one of many examples.

Abandoning the Kyoto protocol and doing nothing to fight against climate change is also an incredible aberration. We must not exceed more than 2% in global warming over the next few years.

I wonder what there is in this bill to protect the environment and fight against climate change.

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[*English*]

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Madam Speaker, as I said in my remarks, what is important is the physics, chemistry and biology of the environment. The histrionics of my friend opposite and all my friends opposite where they throw everything up in the air, having had no experience in environmental management themselves, I find simply incredible.

By focusing on results, by eliminating extraneous and extensive processes, we would see a significant improvement in environmental outcomes in what counts: water quality, fish populations, air quality and so on. Actually, if one looked at environmental indicators from various reports, one would see that, over the life of this government, the environment is improving in terms of air quality and water quality. My colleagues have to look at the numbers as the numbers tell the true story, not —

• (1655)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Questions and comments.

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague asked the rhetorical question whether we should internalize costs for all natural resource industries as if it were some scary socialist thing.

Let me read a quote from someone I will identify momentarily, “The legitimate role for government is in so far as it can to, to control and check negative externalities.” Who said that? Milton Friedman, the go-to guy for principled Conservatives in favour of less government and more private enterprise. Milton Friedman said that it is a legitimate role of government, something he always wanted to minimize, to control and check negative externalities.

What does my hon. colleague think about Milton Friedman and does he respect Milton Friedman's opinion?

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Madam Speaker, yes, I respect him. Friedman and I agree. Government should be controlling negative externalities.

Let me give my hon. friend a specific example. In 1989, the then Mulroney government implemented the pulp and paper effluent regulations. In the mid-1990s, I became an environmental director at a paper mill. I joined the paper mill just as we were finishing constructing a \$25 million waste water treatment plant. Those kinds of treatment plants had to be installed at all pulp and paper mills right across the country. That provided a significant improvement in the effluent for pulp and paper mills.

So, of course, we need to minimize and control negative externalities. Conservative governments have done that and will continue to do that.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Isabelle Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is an honour and a pleasure for me to talk about this bill today. It is also practically a miracle, given that the government has limited the time for debate. I want to point that out right away so that as many people as possible understand what non-Conservative members have to deal with every day. The government

is constantly imposing time limits and gag orders, as my colleague mentioned earlier.

Bill C-38, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget, is the biggest bill that has come before the House this year. The country's finances will be managed and programs will be cut or saved based on what is in this bill. The Conservatives are eliminating many programs.

Not all members of my party or all opposition members will have a chance to talk about this bill, and that is utterly ridiculous.

The bill is over 400 pages long. It is a complex bill that should be studied much longer. Yet the opposition members are up against the time allocation imposed by the government, which is limiting debate. Basically, there is no way to address everything that is in this bill. This is an omnibus bill. As we have said repeatedly on our side of the House, there are many things pertaining to finances in this bill and many things that have nothing to do with finances. With this omnibus bill, the government tried to include all kinds of bills that it wants to pass quickly, without examination and without giving the appropriate committees a chance to study them.

I thank my colleague from Drummond, who pointed out that everything having to do with fish habitat will not be examined by the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development or the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans. Instead, it is the Standing Committee on Finance and its subcommittee that will examine the future of fish habitat in our country, which is ridiculous.

There are several aspects that I wanted to address. I will try to do so as quickly as possible, since I do not have much time. Earlier, a colleague across the floor was talking about youth and how proud he is to see so many things for young people in this bill. I am part of Canada's younger generation and, I must say, if I were an ordinary citizen—I mean if I were not an elected official—and I still had student loans to pay back at age 27, I would find my future very depressing.

There has been a lot of talk about the retirement age. In fact, it is very easy for the government to raise the retirement age from 65 to 67 in the next decade, and it is smart for the Conservatives to include this change in this bill. People will be a bit confused, and 10 years from now, when the change affects them, they will think that the government of the day is to blame. The current government is trying to confuse people so that they will forget what is happening.

What is happening is that the government has raised the age of eligibility for old age security benefits by two years. What impact will that have, aside from shifting the cost to the provinces? It will mean that the most vulnerable people in our society, often women, who receive provincial social assistance benefits, are going to have to wait another two years. Social assistance benefits do not pay as much as old age security benefits. These people are going to have to live two more years in dire straits. This is going to affect my generation, not people who are over 55 now. It is going to affect today's young people, tomorrow's seniors, who are going to have to work for two more years.

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What has the government done for young people? It has done away with the Katimavik program, in which my sister, many of my friends and many people in my riding participated. It was a great program that taught young people the value of bilingualism in Canada, because it gave them an opportunity to learn both official languages. In addition, the program allowed young people to work in other provinces and discover Canada. It gave them the chance to gain leadership experience and become independent. It was a wonderful program that did not cost much compared to what the ministers in this government spend. Yet the government decided that for ideological and political reasons, it did not like this program, so it scrapped it.

• (1700)

The unemployment rate is highest among young people and there is nothing in the government's budget to address youth unemployment.

The government says that it is going to inject millions of dollars into helping the unemployed find jobs. In the meantime, it is cutting positions in the public service and in areas that interest young people, such as the environment. It is cutting funding for community groups that provided jobs. Young people from my generation that are graduating from university are ending up unemployed. The same is true for those finishing CEGEP or secondary school.

We are certainly grateful for the extra \$50 million the Conservatives are going to invest in hiring under the youth employment strategy, but that is not enough. It is a far cry from a job creation strategy for unemployed youth.

A young person in my riding is worried about the skill link program. There is nothing in the budget for that program either. I find it worrisome and I do not understand how the member opposite can say that this budget is so great for youth.

Things with the environment are no better. We are living on a planet that is experiencing global warming. We have seen it over the past few weeks. A month ago it was 27°C out, and the following week it was -5°C. That is not normal. Young people are the ones who are going to suffer the long-term consequences of the Conservatives' current inaction.

As I said earlier, the most ridiculous aspect is that all the environmental measures in this budget will be studied by the Standing Committee on Finance. That is nonsense.

This bill has consequences for the future, for my generation and for everyone. Life expectancy is longer now. People who are 60 today, and who will live to be 80 or 90, will feel the effects.

Pollution is part of our lives today. I have asthma. I moved from Sherbrooke to Montreal and I felt the effects of living in a big city where there is more smog and more pollution. It is not inconsequential. This is happening right now and the Conservatives are doing nothing about it.

It is shocking that nothing is being done for aboriginal youth. We have talked about education for aboriginal youth. The government tries to boast about putting money into education. However, Cindy Blackstock, who is with the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada, took the government to court because it was

shocking to see that nothing was being done for aboriginal peoples and to show the gap between funding for aboriginal children and all other children in Canada.

The government took the case to the Federal Court—we do not know if it will go to the appeal court—and it claimed that aboriginal children cannot be compared with children from another country because their situations are different. I am sorry, but a young Canadian is a young Canadian. Aboriginal children should have the same right to education and the same right to health care as other children.

At the same time that it was boasting about helping aboriginal peoples, the government cut funding to the Native Women's Association of Canada and the Assembly of First Nations. These two groups can no longer continue with their health initiatives. The government is harming the health of Canadian aboriginal children, while boasting about giving money to aboriginal peoples.

Getting back to the environment, this budget puts the kibosh on Kyoto. There is one sentence somewhere in the budget that says the Kyoto protocol will no longer be in force.

I see that I have just a minute left. I do not have much time, but I want to quote Devon Page, executive director of Ecojustice, who said that this budget is “a clear attempt to speed through new legislation and avoid parliamentary debate. And we think it's wrong. Overhauling the laws that protect the air we breathe, the water we drink and the communities we live in needs vigorous debate. That's how democratic societies operate.”

That suggests to me that this executive director thinks our country is not democratic. Personally, that makes me worry about my future.

I have a few seconds left. I would have liked to talk about immigration, a little more about the environment, and transportation. There is nothing in this bill for public transit, even though we would like to see a national public transit strategy. I would have liked to talk a little more about the economy, but I cannot because there is a time allocation motion that denies us the right to speak.

I will answer questions to the best of my ability. The main thing is that we cannot support this bill. It is ridiculous.

• (1705)

[*English*]

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened with some attention to the member's speech. I appreciate her enthusiasm as a youthful member of the House.

The member spoke about there being nothing in the budget for aboriginal people and nothing for cities. I just want to address those two items.

There is some \$275 million in there for education on reserves for first nations people. There is some \$330 million for water upgrades on reserves. That is in addition to the millions and millions that have been going into reserves over the last few years of our government.

In my own riding, we have a brand new school out in Ahousaht. That is where the national chief is from. We have another school in Hesquiaht. They are beautiful schools that drive these communities.

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On the cities, there is just one little point: the gas tax fund is \$2 billion available each and every year for municipal infrastructure. It is very much appreciated in my part of the world. I wonder why the member does not feel that is helping our communities and our cities.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Isabelle Morin: Mr. Speaker, to begin with, I would like to tell my colleague how lucky he is to have money in his riding. I do not have a Conservative riding; therefore, I do not have any money. What I did have in my riding was scrapped. There are going to be fewer jobs in my riding because it is not a Conservative riding.

Investing \$265 million in education is a good thing, of course. However, as I said earlier, the money had to come from somewhere. It was taken away from the aboriginal nations—from groups involved in health care, and groups that did very important work for the aboriginals in our country—and put into education. That is what happened. Although more money was invested in aboriginal education, there was not more money for aboriginals overall. The funds were merely transferred: money was taken away from aboriginals in the area of health care and given back to them in the area of education, and the Conservatives think that that is just fine.

[*English*]

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there has been a lot of Orwellianspeak in this House over the budget.

The budget contains the words “long-term sustainability”, yet it contains within its pages the provision that would remove the protection of fish habitat from the Fisheries Act and instead replace it with doing serious harm to fisheries.

Experts around the country are routinely panning such a shortsighted change to our fisheries, because for long-term sustainability of our fishery we obviously have to protect the habitat.

I did a bit of research and found that when the present government took office, the debt of Canada was \$457 billion. It is \$586 billion today. The current government has run up the highest deficit in the history of Canada.

I wonder if my friend can comment on whether or not she thinks it is fiscally prudent for a government to increase Canada's debt by \$130 billion in six years and run the biggest deficit in Canada's history, second only to Michael Wilson, a previous Conservative finance minister?

• (1710)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Isabelle Morin: Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives often boast that they are the best money managers. That is not true at all. In fact, our country's debt has increased from \$475 billion to \$600 billion. It is a pity for generations like mine, generations of young people.

I should point out that all economists agree that cutting the GST was not a good idea. I also want to point out that we are talking about job creation, which will help our government. What we are seeing are cutbacks. The government is telling us that more jobs are being created in the private sector. We know that the Conservatives want to encourage the private sector. Obviously, when 19,000 jobs are cut from the public sector, it is bound to have that effect. Getting

rid of jobs is a very unhelpful thing for this government to do. I am quite concerned that this will again have repercussions on our deficit.

[*English*]

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon (Mississauga East—Cooksville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise today in the House of Commons to speak to budget 2012, which reflects the unique needs of all Canadians and the strengths of our country, rich in diversity, talent, innovation and resources.

This is a budget we should all be proud of and excited about as we excel into the future. There are several components of budget 2012 that I would like to speak to today, areas that are of particular interest to my constituents, who, over the last year, have shared with me their priorities and concerns and their vision for the future, a vision which can be captured by key measures introduced in economic action plan 2012.

An important part of this budget announces \$150 million over two years for a new community infrastructure improvement fund to support repairs and improvements to existing community facilities.

The city of Mississauga, located just outside Toronto, is easily accessible by highways and close to an international airport. This gives the city a strong competitive advantage in attracting business investment. However, to accommodate this growth, investments in infrastructure are imperative.

Through the economic action plan, over 30,000 projects were completed to build and enhance infrastructure across the country. These projects created jobs for Canadians and will facilitate growth and prosperity for many years to come.

Our investments have not taken a one-size-fits-all approach. They have been carefully focused to address the individual needs of communities across this country.

Since 2006 our government has made several important and impactful investments in Mississauga. To name a few, we have invested \$15.6 million in Sheridan College and \$35 million in the University of Toronto Mississauga Campus. Over the last year, thousands of residents have gathered in the new city square, where our government invested \$13.3 million. Since being there to mark the completion of the project last year, I have visited several times for community celebrations. This project has really contributed to the spirit of community in downtown Mississauga. Furthermore, many residents have been impressed by investments in the redevelopment of the Burnhamthorpe branch library, where our government invested \$5.5 million.

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As Mississauga continues to grow, it has been important to recognize existing infrastructure that needs maintenance in order to keep up with the growing interest of individuals and families in settling here. Across the city, over \$12.3 million dollars was invested in replacing old water mains, which will be necessary to accommodate the great future we have envisioned for the city.

As a result of our government's investments in critical infrastructure, many jobs were created and citizens in my riding experience a better quality of life. We have become aware of what can be accomplished when there is collaboration between all levels of government and a focus on the specific needs of a particular and unique community.

Our government's continued investments in infrastructure provided through budget 2012 will ensure that we will build on the improvements I have highlighted and that our cities can continue to prosper.

The budget also addresses the need for driving innovation and small business investment across Canada to secure our economic advantage. While Canada's GDP is well above pre-recession levels, we still lag behind the other G7 countries in driving innovation. That is why we are focusing resources in ways that the private sector needs them most, through direct investment. This will ensure that we are at the forefront of research and development and that jobs that result from these advancements are brought to Canada rather than lost to foreign firms.

Our government's investments in innovation and small business through budget 2012 will help these companies grow in their capacity to serve and employ residents of Mississauga, which is important to the long-term prosperity of our city.

Building on actions taken since 2006, budget 2012 provides direct investments for research and development to the tune of \$1.1 billion over the course of five years, allowing for investments in the industrial research assistance program to be doubled.

• (1715)

Additionally, budget 2012 would help small businesses invest in growth opportunities by investing \$500 million to help them in accessing early stage risk capital.

Because of our government's focus on driving economic growth and creating jobs, 700,000 more Canadians are working now than in July 2009, exemplary of Canada's position in having the strongest job growth among the G7 countries over the course of recovery.

However, our government understands that many Canadians are still unemployed or underemployed. Economic action plan 2012 shows our commitment to helping Canadians find meaningful employment.

Another part of our plan to support job creation, budget 2012 intends to reduce disincentives to work by investing \$74 million over the course of two years to introduce a new national working while on claim EI pilot project. This pilot project would cut down the clawback rate in half and be applied to all earnings while an individual is receiving employment insurance. This would make it easier for Canadians as they search for permanent and meaningful full-time jobs.

The riding of Mississauga East—Cooksville, which I am proud to represent, is an excellent example of the contributions immigrants have made to this great country, to building our economy and to Canada's strength of diversity in heritage. Canada is attracting some of the world's best and brightest immigrants who have the potential to address our labour needs, supporting the growth of innovative and knowledge based industries.

Budget 2012 expands on the accomplishments of budget 2009 where funding was given to support the recognition of foreign qualifications. Budget 2012 would add six additional occupations to the list by the end of 2012, ensuring that the provinces and territories can address labour shortages quickly and effectively. This proves our government's attention to the evolving needs of our economy.

Over the last year, I spent a great deal of time working with the settlement organizations in my riding that often speak to the difficulties foreign trained professionals have in becoming accredited in Canada and bringing their education and experience to the benefit of Canadian business. In February 2012, our government launched the foreign credential recognition loans pilot to provide funding to these community groups to help them grow in their capacity to provide financial assistance to those professionals who are on the road to bringing new business and innovative ideas to Canadians.

Today I have highlighted only a few of the ways that budget 2012 would impact my constituents and all Canadians in real and meaningful ways in their everyday lives, bringing to light many of the priorities of my constituents.

However, it is also important to note that the budget is not short-sighted. It takes into consideration a long-term view for the prosperity of Canada. Budget 2012 introduces measures that would lay the foundation for the prosperous future of our economy. It builds on the momentum and accomplishments we have realized over the last few years and demonstrates a strong vision for building the long-term future of Canada.

It is clear that budget 2012 builds on the accomplishments of our government to support the economy and job creation. Ellen McGregor, chair and co-owner of Fielding Chemical Technologies, Canada's leader in chemical and refrigerant recycling, a business located in my riding, has applauded our work to date and the measures taken in the budget by stating, "Our government is approaching the management of the country like the management of the best-run company, or for that matter, a best-managed household. This budget's measures focus on debt reduction balanced against the goals for increased growth and prosperity. I applaud [the Prime Minister] and his government for the courage it takes to reduce government spending while stimulating job creation and supporting key social programs, for which Canada is proud".

Government Orders

Budget 2012 not only reflects our government's focus on job creation and economic growth, but also proves a sound understanding of the needs of Canadians, the challenges we face and the realities of a global economy. I am thrilled for the benefits it will bring to my riding and to all Canadians.

• (1720)

[Translation]

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened very carefully to my colleague.

I do not know if my colleague and I are looking at the same document, but Bill C-38 is supposed to be a budget implementation bill. The member seems very proud to say that it is not a short-sighted bill. Maybe not, but it will massacre nearly every system that exists in Canada for years to come.

What does he think of a budget implementation bill that has 753 clauses, of which only 51 have to do with taxes? The other 702 announce a new way of governing and have nothing to do with any budgetary matters.

[English]

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon: Mr. Speaker, I do not know why the member would be confused with the document.

In my speech I focused on the process. This is not a two year, one year or half a year process. This has been going on since 2006 and it is a process that will be going on for many years to come.

It takes planning and a certain implementation to ensure that this country grows, businesses grow and that people find suitable employment to take care of their families and put food on the table. This is what we are implementing. It is not a process that will end today or after this bill. This will continue for many years to come.

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I agree with the member for Gatineau. I do not know what document the member for Mississauga East—Cooksville was speaking to but he did talk about debt reduction.

Yes, there is debt reduction in the bill, but it would certainly increase the gap between the rich and the poor. Bill C-38 is clearly a charter of rights for the corporate sector so that it can exploit and extract resources without any recourse from the people of Canada on our environment and industries. We know that corporations are not investing the billions of dollars they have invested.

Regardless of our differences, 70 pieces of legislation would be affected by this bill. Will the member at least stand in his place and agree to split the bill so that this place can have a debate and Canadians can see the real impact and the real damage that this bill would have on this country?

• (1725)

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon: Mr. Speaker, I think that question was raised several times during today's question period.

The answer is simple and our Minister of Finance answered it. This is a large budget that affects a high number of implementation bills. That is what we are discussing here today. After we debate it here in the House, the bill will go to committee where everybody will have time to discuss it and look at the details.

Mr. Brian Jean (Fort McMurray—Athabasca, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know the member is very passionate in relation to his belief in what the Conservative government is doing.

One of the first steps we took as a government was to cut \$37 billion in debt when we first took office. Of course, that has brought us to the tremendous place of having the lowest debt ratio in 25 years. I wonder if the member would speak to that in relation to how his constituents feel about paying off the mortgage and getting to the lowest debt ratio in 25 years.

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon: Mr. Speaker, I do not think my constituents are much different from the constituents of other members on both sides of the House. They are looking for stable employment, safe communities, safe streets and a good future for their children, and that is what this government is giving them and that is why we were re-elected a year ago. We are implementing responsible economic policies. This is the plan that has been working for the past five years and we will continue it for the future of our great country.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is with ever-increasing sadness that I rise in the House today, because every time I do so, I am left with the impression that the reasons my constituents elected me are being scorned. That said, I have 10 precious minutes to try to give an informed judgment on a document that is over 400 pages long, and this is only because I am one of the rare, lucky ones who is able to speak in this shortened debate. Understandably, then, I will not launch into a comprehensive study of the economic elements. Instead, I will try to point out what is wrong with this proposed legislation as clearly as I possibly can.

The first thing that struck me is the discrepancy that exists between the bill's short title and the objectives or intentions of the bill in question. I would add that I am often surprised by this. In this case, for instance, the short title of Bill C-38, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 29, 2012 and other measures, is this: the jobs, growth and long-term prosperity act. Ouch.

Government Orders

Before getting into all the contradictions and ambiguities of such a title, I want to say a few words about the bill itself. It is clearly stated that this bill concerns the budget, and that it also implements other measures. This bill therefore goes beyond implementing the budget. It introduces a series of measures that were never announced in the budget. These measures are very different in nature. I will name a few in passing: eligibility age for old age security benefits; the environmental protection and regulations system—we immediately see the link between old age security and the environment; the authority of the Auditor General—also closely linked; and then, why not throw in the Fair Wages and Hours of Labour Act? I will stop there because I do not have enough time.

Under the pretext of balancing the budget—in a forced march and for purely ideological reasons—the government is in fact imposing on Parliament and all Canadians a hidden agenda that will quickly change everyday life for the people in this country, and unfortunately, not for the better.

We feel that what the government is doing is contrary to parliamentary practice and procedures. A budget implementation bill should not be used as an opportunity to limit debate and push through detrimental measures designed to reduce government transparency and accountability. Let us be clear in case Canadians have not fully grasped what is happening here: Bill C-38 is actually an omnibus bill that goes far beyond the budget and unilaterally imposes the Conservatives' decisions without allowing for real debate.

I have envisioned many different political scenarios, but reality today is beyond anything I ever could have imagined. I get the feeling that within a year, there will probably be one catch-all bill a year, with seven days of debate, and the House will be on holidays for the rest of the year. I feel I am being very well paid for all the work I am not being allowed to do.

Why does Canada have a Parliament with two chambers if the government is going to use all its power and questionable tactics to limit debate, get around parliamentary rules and tune out the official opposition? Is that the Conservatives' idea of democracy? The Conservatives need to do more than just keep shouting all the time that they won a strong mandate if they want to have real legitimacy. They also need to respect this country's institutions as they govern.

Most of the major changes in Bill C-38 do not address Canadians' concerns. Canadians are telling us that they want more good-quality jobs, better environmental protection and a better health care system. Nothing in this bill reflects the real concerns of Canadians. As I was saying earlier, more careful analysis of this bill reveals the discrepancy between its short title and its real intentions.

The short title of Bill C-38 is the “Jobs, Growth and Long-term Prosperity Act”. I will repeat these three components: jobs, growth and long-term prosperity.

• (1730)

In recent months, the government's decisions have led to job losses, jeopardized economic growth and put Canada on the list of slackers in both environmental protection and sustainable development.

With regard to this last point, we have reason to be especially worried about the bill's provisions. In this House, we all know that it is our responsibility to protect the environment, fight climate change and preserve the diversity of living things and our ecosystems. Our duty is to leave a healthy and viable natural environment to our children. The vast majority of developed countries are putting environmental strategies in place, making significant international commitments, and signing binding and necessary agreements to fight the destruction of our ecosystems. However, this government is once again swimming against the current.

For example, this bill changes the regulations that protect fish and govern the deposit of toxic and deleterious substances into fish habitats. More seriously still, this bill repeals the Kyoto Protocol Implementation Act, which shows just how little the government cares about issues that affect and will continue to affect all Canadians. This means that the government will no longer have to report its GHG emissions. That is a major step backward for our country and all of our international partners.

Canadians want us to take action to fight climate change and protect our environment, but the Conservatives are determined to dismantle environmental protection rules and attack environmental protection groups. Many of the provisions in the bill point to the fact that environmental protection has completely disappeared from this government's agenda.

The government has gutted the federal environmental assessment regime to speed up major projects, such as oil pipelines. It has delegated the environmental assessment process to other authorities. It has made sure that projects in other countries are not subject to Canadian laws.

This budget is not good for jobs and labour, either. For a few weeks now, there has been announcement after announcement, and jobs are being lost across the country. Everywhere there is talk of cuts, job losses and, inevitably, cuts to services for Canadians. The Conservatives' ideological vision will have a direct impact on the health of Canada's economy. Their approach to the budget is an accounting approach, aimed solely at reducing the deficit. In the medium term, the Conservatives' budget policy will seriously hurt this country's economic development.

I will take a specific example. In my riding, the Forges du Saint-Maurice National Historic Site will be hard hit by the government's cuts, which will mean job losses and a shorter season for the site. These cuts are like a death sentence for this major historic site. Investments depend on the number of visitors to the site, but because the government is not investing in the site, fewer and fewer people are visiting it. Because the number of visitors is down, funding is being cut. It is like the Hygrade wiener slogan, only in reverse. It is a downward spiral.

Government Orders

The closing of this park will have an even more serious impact on the whole region. The money the government thinks it is saving with these budget cuts will be lost elsewhere.

One minute to condemn so many policies is simply not long enough. I am very sorry for my friends at the Vieilles Forges park. I will definitely come back to this issue during question period and I will not back down.

In closing, unfortunately, this bill represents a shift even further away from this wishful thinking. Transparency is not a strong point of the Conservatives. Bill C-38 contains many measures that will reduce transparency and limit accountability requirements.

Consider three quick examples. Section 1 of part 4 amends a number of laws to remove the Auditor General's requirement to conduct a financial audit of certain agencies and assess the performance reports of two public organizations. Section 15 of part 4 amends the Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act to abolish the position of Inspector General. Section 25 of part 4 dissolves the Public Appointments Commission and its secretariat.

Once again, I could go on. I will stop here and simply say that nothing in this budget will serve the Canada of the future, which we should be building today.

• (1735)

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his inspired and inspiring speech about a disappointing government bill.

I would like to focus more on the form of the bill than on its substance. This is the 18th time the government has imposed closure, this time in order to ram a 431-page brick down members' throats with just seven days of debate. Some Conservative members are saying that this is part of a long process that has been going on since 2006, but that is baloney. I am one of about 100 new parliamentarians, and we were not in the House prior to May 2, 2011. We have the right to do our job, which is to carefully study bills. A bill that amends 69 different pieces of legislation is an elephant, a mammoth.

I would like to know what my colleague thinks about the Conservative government's practice of introducing huge bills and imposing closure. It is completely antidemocratic.

Mr. Robert Aubin: Mr. Speaker, the short answer would be to use the word "abject" to describe this bill.

I totally agree with my colleague. A lot changed in the last election and this government does not seem to want to take that into account. It is muzzling those who have not taken part in the debates. Canadians sent a very clear message: in the game of politics, this government ended up in power with 39% of the vote. That means that 61% of the population has to be able to express itself through the voices of the hon. members from the other parties. It would seem that the government wants to muzzle us. In fact, more than "it would seem", it is indeed muzzling us. I think that 18 closure motions in one year is an all-time record in the history of this country's Parliament.

• (1740)

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Jean (Fort McMurray—Athabasca, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member is right in respect of one thing. We should talk about the substance of the bill and we should talk about the content of it. It is a big bill, but we are in big times. We are in important times for the world, an economic global crisis. Of course we will respond to what Canadians need in a big bill because they need big changes.

Could the member speak about why his party, the NDP, voted against some of the things we did? For instance, we cut the lowest personal income tax rate to 15%. We removed over one million Canadians from the tax rolls. We increased the amount that Canadians could earn tax-free. We reduced the GST from 7% to 6% to 5%, which puts nearly \$1,000 back in the pockets of every Canadian.

Those are things that Canadians said they wanted. Those were things that Canadians said they needed. We responded accordingly because of the time.

Why would the member and his party vote against those things about which Canadians have talked? We bring forward good measures and they vote against them. Why?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin: Mr. Speaker, the answer is quite simple. My eminent colleague is concerned with the substance rather than the form. However, the form is just as important as the substance.

I have been observing the following Conservative strategy for a year. Along with the few good measures that we would be prepared to support, they try to ram through 28 totally unacceptable measures on the pretext that the measures are part of a package deal that we can take or leave. One of our motions sought to divide up this bill so that the elements we find acceptable could move along more quickly. It is quite appalling that the Conservatives want to ram through so many abject measures in this way.

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP): Mr. Speaker, since they want us to talk substance, we will talk substance.

Earlier, I was struck by my colleague's remarks on La Mauricie National Park and the Forges du Saint-Maurice.

I was wondering about the devastating impact on jobs. In my colleague's honest opinion, is the government trying to do its worst or is it just being lazy?

Mr. Robert Aubin: Mr. Speaker, it is both. I was particularly surprised in this case. Call me naive, but I was expecting more funding for the Forges du Saint-Maurice given that the first cannonballs for the War of 1812 were made there. I thought that great things would be happening this year. Instead, the government eliminated 26 jobs and cut the season down to two months, July and August, which is ridiculous.

Government Orders

[English]

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very honoured and pleased to speak to this fantastic budget that has come forward from our government. We have a global recession and Canada looks better than any other country in the world. Why? Because it is all about the policies that our government has put in place, balanced policies, ripe with job growth, entrepreneurship, innovation and research, all measures that cause a country to grow.

Our government has improved conditions for business investments with responsible resource development. So much has happened in our country. Many people want to come to Canada because this is a country where families can grow and prosper.

Unfortunately, I come from a province that has an NDP government where 40¢ on the dollar has to come from our federal government to keep Manitoba afloat. Therefore, in a time of economic fragility, when other countries are looking to Canada for the leadership it has shown, through balanced and careful strategic planning, we have been able to keep our economy very stable.

I am so pleased that my province of Manitoba will continue to receive significant support through the major federal transfers for 2012-13. It will reach an all-time high of \$59 billion, \$3 billion more than last year. In this time of recession, Manitoba, which gets 40¢ on the dollar from the federal government, will continue to receive more.

Why? Because there has been a job creation implementation plan that will help Manitobans get back to work. There is a revised EI plan that will cause people to want to get off EI and get jobs. In addition to this increased support, there is an extension by one year of total transfer protection to provinces to ensure that no province, such as Manitoba, experiences a decline in its combined entitlements under the CHT, CST and equalization. Therefore, for Manitoba, major transfers will total almost \$3.4 billion in 2012-13. This long-term growing support helps ensure that Manitoba has the resources required to provide essential public services and contribute to shared national objectives, including health care.

I have been mystified to hear in the House, over and over again, that the government has cut the transfer payments and the health care budget. In fact, it has been increased by 6% to Manitoba. I am just astounded to hear this other kind of message go out there, but Manitobans know that this has happened.

Post-secondary education and other key components of Canada's social programs have been uplifted in Manitoba. There are almost \$1.7 billion through equalization. That is an increase of \$70 million since 2005-06. The rest of the globe's economies have gone down and we have stabilized and have the opportunity for families to grow.

There are almost \$1.1 billion through the Canada health transfer, an increase of \$278 million since 2005-06 when our government came into power. Since we were able to get a strong, stable government mandate from the people of Canada, this government has not let Canadians down. It has done everything it has promised to do.

There are \$429 million going to the Canada social transfer, an increase of \$96 million since 2005-06. There are \$201 million in total transfer protection.

Manitoba will also benefit from direct targeted support in 2012-13, including \$18 million for labour market training, as part of a commitment of \$500 million a year in new funding to provinces and territories, beginning in 2008-09.

• (1745)

There is \$9 million for the wait times reduction fund as part of the 10-year plan to strengthen health care.

I am so pleased to say that there is reassurance for families. Families feel that quite honestly our government has contributed to their well-being. They can grow and prosper, even in a province like Manitoba that gets 40 cents on the dollar from the federal government.

We can see things moving in a very positive way, a very careful way, a very well thought-out way. Families are so afraid that the economy in this country will tip and go down, but they are not that afraid anymore because they are getting benefits from the government that allow them to have a lot of tax breaks, that allow that money they earn, that they spend hours earning, go back into their pockets instead of into government pockets.

We cut the lowest personal income tax rate to 15%. Our government removed over one million Canadians from the tax rolls. We increased the amount Canadians can earn, tax-free. More money goes in the pockets of Canadians, so they can spend their money the way they think is best, without the government telling them how to do it.

We reduced the GST from 7% to 5%, putting nearly \$1,000 back in the pockets of an average family of four. Families know how to spend their money better than any government official, better than any member of Parliament. Canadians want to be able to retain their own hard-earned tax dollars and be able to make a better life for their families.

Others things happened that made it possible for families to increase their quality of life, for instance, the children's fitness tax credit. A lot of families were not able to send their kids to different fitness organizations, but the tax credit has helped a lot. The children's arts tax credit was also added on, and the family caregiver tax credit.

As members know, in this country, in three years, we are going to have more seniors than we have young people. The family caregiver tax credit is so beneficial when one has a critically ill loved family member and one has to make that sacrifice of being the caregiver one wants to be.

Government Orders

There is the first-time homebuyers tax credit, registered disability savings plans, volunteer firefighters tax credit, working income tax benefit, child tax credit and textbook tax credit. My own daughter has gone through five years of university, and we all appreciate that textbook tax credit very much. That is for Canadian families.

There is the public transit tax credit to encourage people to use the bus, the Canada employment tax credit and the deduction of the cost of tools for tradespeople.

Our government has been clear in trying to build on the benefit of families, ordinary Canadians, people who can grow and prosper in this country, not to be afraid, to be proud of what they are doing as families.

Since taking office in 2006, our government has been lowering taxes, with more than 140 tax cuts altogether. I know this helps hard-working families get ahead. Right now, today, families are paying over \$3,000 less in taxes in Canada than they have ever done before.

The budget is big. It is a big document because, as a previous speaker said, there are a lot of things that have to be done in this country. However, this budget has to go through to allow all these things to take place in this country and to allow people to continue to grow and raise their families.

• (1750)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. friend from Kildonan—St. Paul who is one of the hardest working MPs and who has done so much for people in the human trafficking area.

I rarely get to ask her a question so it pains me to ask her one on this issue. Bill C-38, despite the few things I like, such as allowing recovering people to work while they are on EI, claim that and not have it all clawed back, contains some measures that are good but overall I am so very deeply aggrieved by the number of bills that are thrown into Bill C-38 that are not part of proper fiscal measures, particularly those overhauls of the Canadian Environment Assessment Act, the Fisheries Act, the Species at Risk Act and so on.

I would like to ask my hon. friend if she does not think there is some chance that the Minister of Finance might relent and pull out those sections that are not properly part of a budget, so they can be properly and separately debated?

Mrs. Joy Smith: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is an amazing woman and has done a lot of things in this country. I respect her question. However, in a time of economic downturn, in this very fragile economy, choices have to be made and the bottom line is job growth. The bottom line is to make sure people can have jobs to feed their families. I would think that a government with true leadership would pick those priorities very carefully.

Sometimes it is painful when other things cannot be included because we want to be all things to all people. What a government does and what Canadians expect is for the government to keep them safe, to make sure they have the job opportunities and to keep this country stable. That is what we are doing.

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I too would like to congratulate the member for her good speech, but I could not help noticing what could be described as a triumphalist tone near the beginning when she seemed to imply that

all of the credit for Canada's better-than-average performance goes to the government. Does she believe that the Conservative government planted the oil in Alberta or the minerals across the country? Does she not understand that the reason Canada's banks are doing well is because the previous Liberal government refused to go the route of bank self-regulation, as in the U.S.? Does she not understand that the healthy fiscal position is because the government inherited a \$13 billion surplus, which it proceeded to fritter away in short order? I think a more—

• (1755)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The hon. member for Kildonan—St. Paul.

Mrs. Joy Smith: Mr. Speaker, I admire my very esteemed colleague's hyperbole, which is great, but by the same token I want to remind the very esteemed member that the previous government cut \$25 billion in social transfers to this country. That cut health care in a big way. I would invite the member to join in and vote for this budget. I know his heart is in the right place. He wants to see Canadians grow and prosper and I appreciate his doing that. I will give him credit when he does it, I promise.

Mr. Brian Jean (Fort McMurray—Athabasca, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member has done a tremendous amount of work to stop human smuggling around the world, especially here in Canada, and to bring it to people's attention.

I am wondering if she could comment very briefly on regulatory changes we are making. As the previous Liberal member said, there have to be some good changes and we have made some, such as one project, one review for Canadians to know with certainty what is going to take place, but also the \$2.5 billion in annual tax relief for seniors and removing more than 380,000 seniors from the tax rolls, including pension income splitting, which is so popular with seniors.

Could she comment on those two things, please?

Mrs. Joy Smith: Mr. Speaker, I thank my esteemed colleague for his very insightful comments and also his knowledge about business. He himself is a very successful business person because he understands.

With regard to seniors, I would like to comment on the OAS. I talked a little earlier about making sure that there is balance and that we have the programs to sustain this country, and OAS is one of them. We would raise it to age 67 in the year 2023, but outside of that the reason why it would be done is that we want it there for all people.

I understand my time has run out, but I would be glad to answer the question at another time.

Government Orders

[Translation]

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have just four problems with this bill: first, the fact that it increases the retirement age from 65 to 67; second, the nature of the cuts; third, the lack of transparency, and finally, the lack of democracy.

[English]

Let me please, in my time available, deal with each of these four issues.

Raising the age for old age security from 65 to 67 is undemocratic, unnecessary and unfair. It is undemocratic because the government ran in the last election without a mention of this important policy step, and it only did it once elected. It is unnecessary because every expert has said that our system is indeed sustainable. The Chief Actuary of Canada, the Parliamentary Budget Officer and the OECD have all said it is sustainable. Yes, it will go up by .8% of GDP between now and 2030; then it will come down. But that amount is highly affordable compared with the situation other countries face.

It is undemocratic, it is unnecessary and it is unfair because it picks on the most vulnerable citizens in Canada. People like us, working largely in sedentary jobs, or not physical labour, may be able to go on working until we are 80, but people who do hard physical labour in their jobs may find their bodies are not able to continue after 65 and they would then be put on welfare. Also, those in the lower income categories eligible for GIS would not be able to collect that for a further two years, so it would cost the most vulnerable Canadians something in the order of \$30,000.

If members do not agree with me and they argue that it is not sustainable, that is wrong, but let us say they do, there are other ways to limit the cost of old age security, which would not have those same negative effects on Canada's most vulnerable citizens. For example, the government could cut off the income at which OAS gets cut off to a lower level. That would save money and it would hurt the higher income people rather than the lower income people.

There are many ways to skin a cat, and the government has chosen the way that would be most hard on the most vulnerable.

Coming now to my second point, which is the cuts, Liberals are not necessarily opposed to cuts in principle, if they are necessary. After inheriting a \$42 billion deficit in 1993, the government moved quickly to balance the books and paid down debt for almost 10 years. Later on, in 2004-05 we found expenditure savings or cuts of \$11 billion spread over five years. We are not necessarily opposed to cuts in principle, but my beef with the Conservative government is the things it did cut and the things it should have cut but did not cut.

In the first category, the things the government did cut, which were wrong to cut, the most egregious case in my view is the fact that 50% of the employees of Statistics Canada received messages that they might be laid off. This is coming after the disastrous ending of the long form census, which means Canadians will no longer know the nature of their country, as they once did. This shows the government's tendency to cut things that are information-based policy-makers in favour of ideology-based policy. Statistics Canada cuts, as well as major cuts to environmental scientists, go to the heart

of our knowledge. If the government is going to cut, that is not the place to cut.

Second, public safety is always job one for government. I am concerned that cuts to food inspectors at the Canadian Food Inspection Agency could bring on another Walkerton.

Despite the fact that Elections Canada is involved in a major electoral fraud investigation, the government chose to cut Elections Canada by \$7.5 million, all in the first year.

That is enough on the cuts I do not like. I will now speak about things the government could have cut.

● (1800)

The government could have put the F-35 out to tender. In a book coming out today, the former ADM for materiel, Alan Williams, makes a strong case that this F-35 business has been mishandled from day one. He has also indicated that a competitive bidding process would save the taxpayer some billions of dollars. Similarly, I do not think we need to spend billions of dollars on prisons. I note that the government has had a 230% increase in its advertising budget since 2006, much of it partisan. There are many areas where the government could have found additional funding to cut. There are many things it did cut which it should not have cut. That is a second very good reason to oppose this budget.

The third problem I have with it is the lack of transparency and accountability. When we were the government in 2004-05, we found \$11 billion worth of cuts over five years. Every single cut was itemized in the budget by program and department. The current government brings in cuts seven years later and nothing is itemized in the budget. We are left to hear gradually, from leaks or union leaks, which people have lost their jobs. Technology has not regressed since 2005. There is no reason the Conservatives could not have itemized all the cuts in the budget the way we did in 2005. Then Canadians would have known which programs would be affected and which people would lose their jobs. The technology is there: the Conservatives could have released this information in a timely fashion. The only reason they chose not to was because they figured out that Canadians would not like to hear the news.

Government Orders

I come now to my to my final point: lack of democracy. Many people have already alluded to this, but it is absolutely unacceptable in a democracy to have an omnibus bill which contains 70 different pieces of legislation and to rush this through without taking it to committees of the House of Commons other than the finance committee. It is egregious. I have not seen anything like this before. I know it is true that a majority can eventually get everything it wants through the House. That is what the Conservatives have and that is what the people of Canada chose. I do not object to that. However, there should be a process of analysis, calling of witnesses, investigation of the implications and possible amendments. Yet none of this is happening because the government is rushing through this huge piece of legislation and not taking it to the relevant committees.

•(1805)

[*Translation*]

In closing, as I said, there are four things I do not like about this bill. First, it is totally unfair to increase the age of retirement from 65 to 67, and it is unnecessary. Second, the nature of the cuts is no good. The bill makes cuts where it should not and does not make any where it should. Third, there is a lack of transparency and information. The government is not telling us where these cuts will be made. Finally, there is a lack of democracy. For all these reasons, the Liberals will certainly be voting against this bill.

[*English*]

Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Oxford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleague across the floor. I am sure if he had had more time he would have said that this Minister of Finance is the finest he has seen in the last 20 years. I know he just did not have enough time to get that out. However, I did listen to him talk about the F-35. Would he like to explain to the House and to Canadians who it was and which government it was that bought the Victoria class submarines and the process used, and who started the process on the F-35 for Canada?

Hon. John McCallum: Mr. Speaker, that was before my time. I do not know the exact process used to buy the submarines. I do know something about the F-35 because I was defence minister in those days. I can tell the hon. member, as is detailed in Alan Williams' book that came out today, the Liberal government of the day put some money into that project for industrial benefits for this country. That paid back quite well. We had nothing to do with the choice of the plane. That was purely an American decision. There was zero commitment to buy it at that time. That is how we got into that thing. Alan Williams describes in great detail in his book a process that has been back to front. The military specified what plane it wanted first, whereas it was supposed to specify its needs and Public Works was supposed to take it from there. So it has been a total mess from 2006 onward on the F-35.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague a question about old age security.

We have heard the Conservative members say that people will have enough time to prepare. Many people in my riding had planned to retire at 55. They had mapped out their financial affairs in order to retire at 55, based on the assumption that, at 65, they would begin receiving the old age security pension. I would like to know if

someone who is currently 53 years old will be able to prepare for the change in two years.

Hon. John McCallum: Mr. Speaker, I agree with my colleague: it is hard to make any long-term plans, but this issue of age is not my main point. Here are my main points: first of all, it is unnecessary because the current system is not posing any problems for Canada; second, it is unfair because MPs are not the ones who will be affected by this measure, but rather more vulnerable individuals. Poor people and poor seniors will be the ones to have problems and that is therefore incredibly unfair.

•(1810)

[*English*]

Mr. Merv Tweed (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to the member's comments. I have heard it mentioned several times from members opposite today and I have a very simple question. Politicians like to attend openings of new facilities to cut ribbons. Would the member tell us where the newest prison in Canada has been built?

Hon. John McCallum: Mr. Speaker, I cannot answer that question, but it is clear from research that has been done that unless the Conservatives are planning to double bunk every prisoner in the country, there will be a need for new facilities over time. Estimates of the cost vary, but have typically been in the billions of dollars.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, we have had a lot of debate in this House about precedence in terms of the length of debate time for budget implementation bills and the length of budget implementation bills. My colleague has been here for much longer than me. Has he ever seen a budget implementation bill that covered more than 70 unrelated bills with time allocation applied?

Hon. John McCallum: Mr. Speaker, absolutely not. I have been here since 2001 and we have had budget implementation bills but nothing on the scale of 70 pieces of legislation being changed and debate being shortened in this way. This is truly an unprecedented move in Canada.

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a great pleasure to stand and enter this debate today on Bill C-38. It is a budget implementation act. I appreciate there is a lot of engagement around the House today from members opposite and members on this side of the House. As all members will recall, budget 2012 was tabled on March 29. It launches the next phase of our economic action plan.

The budget was applauded by economists from coast to coast. The member for Markham—Unionville just spoke. As he is a former economist, I was waiting for him to echo some of the economists across Canada, representing the major banks, who applauded the budget.

Government Orders

There is a reason that economists from across the country have applauded our measures in the budget. All over the world, nations are reeling from the chaos of a worldwide economic meltdown that struck in 2008 and worsened through 2009. Even this week, we saw major changes in two countries in Europe. With France and Greece reorganizing new governments and new leaders, political fallout is taking a toll on social stability.

By contrast, Canada has been shaken, but remains stable. The World Economic Forum, the International Monetary Fund, Moody's and *Forbes* magazine have all applauded Canada's economic performance and predict we are positioned to lead world economies in the next years. The reason economists have embraced our budget is because they recognize the choices made in our economic action plan that keep Canada moving in the right direction.

Phase two of the economic action plan is a plan for jobs, for growth and for long-term prosperity. Budget 2012 takes important steps to address the challenges and take advantage of the opportunities of a global economy while ensuring sustainable social programs and sound public finances for future generations. The budget contains reforms that are substantial. They are responsible and they are necessary. They are reforms that will ensure that across government we are focused on sustaining Canada's long-term economic growth.

Just as we did in the first phase of Canada's economic action plan, the focus of this budget is on boosting economic growth and job creation. It is on stimulating innovation, investment, education and skills. Let me just list, in broad strokes, the major initiatives in Bill C-38.

The initiatives would be making major investments of over \$1 billion to support science and technology; providing \$500 million to spur growth of innovative start-up companies; ensuring responsible resource development by moving to one project one review, with a clearly defined time period for major economic projects while continuing to protect the environment; opening new markets and expanding international trade, bringing Canadian goods to the world; extending the hiring credit for small business for one more year to make it more attractive for small business to grow and to hire more workers; providing \$150 million over two years for the new community infrastructure improvement fund; providing \$5.2 billion over 11 years to renew the Canadian Coast Guard. That is something that is going to impact communities on both coasts of this great country and in the north. It is essential, and it will serve our communities for many years to come.

We would be focusing on employment insurance and promoting job creation by removing disincentives to work and supporting unemployed Canadians by connecting them more quickly to jobs. We would be providing \$275 million over three years to support first nations education and to build and renovate schools on reserve. The measures over the last couple of years, which this initiative builds on, have made a huge difference in first nations in coastal B.C.

I mentioned earlier in a question and comment about a new school in Ahousaht. Some 800 people live in that community with only boat access. The new school is a huge asset in that community and it is going to impact education, which is a priority for the national chief. The Chief of the Assembly of First Nations is from

the coast of British Columbia. In addition to that on reserve, some \$330 million would be going into upgrading water systems on reserve. It is extremely important for our remote, rural communities.

We would be building a fast and flexible economic immigration system to track immigrants with the skills and experience our economy needs. Our Minister of Immigration has been doing a major overhaul to make sure we attract the kinds of immigrants who are going to contribute to long-term prosperity in Canada, not only for their own families, but for our Canadian economy at the same time.

If we pause and take a look back, it is helpful to remember that after forming government in 2006, this government paid down nearly \$40 billion on our national debt.

● (1815)

That positioned us well, inasmuch as in the ensuing recession period we had to run a deficit to provide the much-needed economic stimulus and keep people working.

The economic action plan launched a massive infrastructure investment plan. Yes, we hired more federal employees to ensure the money was well administered and went to projects that would position Canada well, creating economic opportunities that are having a positive impact right now across Canada from coast to coast.

We also launched a work-sharing program. We expanded EI benefits. We launched retraining programs for displaced workers and invested big time in education and science infrastructure. That was through the knowledge infrastructure program. All of this was to keep people working and to prepare for tomorrow's jobs.

The net result of prudent planning is that Canada has emerged as one of the top-performing industrialized countries.

Since the peak of the recession in July 2009, our economy has seen almost 700,000 new jobs, and most of those are full time. Canada is the only G7 country that has come out of the recession with more jobs than we had when we went into it.

Keeping taxes low for Canadians has been a key policy for this government. Since 2006, we have reduced the tax burden of Canadians through some 140 measures. As a result, the average Canadian family of four saves about \$3,100 each and every year.

Government Orders

The budget contains measures to create employment. Included are a \$1,000 hiring credit for small business and incentives for apprentices of up to \$4,000 for tools, tuition and travel expenses. That would be for the Red Seal trades. Improvements to EI and the temporary foreign workers program would help connect Canadians with available jobs, including those seniors who are willing and able to work and who wish to continue working.

I made reference earlier to mega-investments in science, technology and innovation through granting agencies such as Genome Canada and the Canadian Foundation for Innovation. In addition, there is \$105 million to fund innovation in the forestry sector, which is extremely important to generate value-added production, something that we are very interested in, in coastal British Columbia. Investments in the Coast Guard fleet and helicopter renewal valued at \$5.2 billion will be of benefit to coastal communities.

There are huge investments to help improve the living conditions and opportunities for vulnerable people in remote settings. I mentioned the water systems on reserve, but there are big investments in education on reserve. That \$275 million across the nation is going to make a difference.

In order to ensure the sustainability of old age security, the age of eligibility would be gradually raised to 67, starting in 2023 and fully implemented in 2029.

In two decades, the number of retirees will double and costs will triple. Meanwhile, by 2030, if the system is unchanged, the number of taxpayers for every senior will be down to two from, currently, about four. In 2010 there were four; when the program was initiated, there were seven.

We have ensured that the changes are made with substantial notice and with an adjustment period. They would not affect current retirees or those close to retirement and would give others plenty of time to adjust to the changes and plan for their retirement.

Overall, in British Columbia we would benefit from \$5.6 billion in health, education and social transfers, fulfilling our promise to balance the federal budget without cutting transfers to the provinces.

The budget is focused on jobs and long-term prosperity. As with the previous phase of the economic action plan, it addresses the changing worldwide economic situation and is designed to keep Canada competitive for the benefit of all Canadians.

Let me quote from the president of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, Berry Vrbanovic. He said:

Canada's municipal leaders welcome today's commitment by the federal government to continue working with cities and communities to rebuild the local roads, water systems, community centres and public transit that our families, business and economy depend on.

He goes on to say that:

Today's budget continues building a new infrastructure partnership that creates jobs and strengthens Canada's future economic foundations.

Of course, I know that our municipalities in coastal B.C. are very appreciative of that gas tax fund, the \$2 billion fund that we increased even during tough economic times. Our great finance

minister extended that gas tax fund to \$2 billion to ensure municipalities have the funds to move ahead with important projects.

* * *

• (1820)

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 81(4) (a), I would like at this time to designate Wednesday, May 9, for consideration in committee of the whole of all votes under National Defence in the main estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2013.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The House appreciates the notice from the government House leader.

* * *

[*Translation*]

JOBS, GROWTH AND LONG-TERM PROSPERITY ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-38, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 29, 2012 and other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to my eminent colleague's speech, and I was surprised at how many economic issues he addressed in so short a time. It was almost like listening to a budget debate.

My question is very simple: does he not believe that it would be quite appropriate to split this omnibus bill in order to deal with various issues individually, as we should?

[*English*]

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know the member is a new member in the House. Some of us were here through three minority parliaments on our way to the present majority government situation. We advanced and discussed many of these issues over the previous five years of minority government.

The economic situation worldwide demands that we move ahead on a number of projects that were held up in minority parliaments. Many of these issues have been debated for years. It is time to move ahead and to get Canada's economy moving. It is time to keep jobs going at a time of economic recovery and to keep moving in the right direction. It is time to move beyond the stimulus measures of the previous two budgets to balancing our budgets.

That is what our government is doing: keeping an eye on the ball, an eye on the economy and an eye on what is happening worldwide. Our government is advancing international trade and making sure that we create the jobs that will keep Canadians employed.

Government Orders

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I basically disagree with everything the member for Nanaimo—Alberni gave in his response to that last question, because he is just talking foolishness. However, I do respect my colleague a lot. He and I sat on the fisheries committee for many years, and I know he is very concerned about the fisheries.

Therefore, I ask him this: given the number of changes to fisheries and environment in this 425-page budget implementation bill that will change 70 pieces of legislation, does he, as a former member of the fisheries committee, really think that giving limited debate—and mainly to the finance committee—is fair to the fishermen and to the provinces concerned about fisheries? Does he think that the impact of basically transferring that responsibility from the feds to the provinces is really fair and does justice to this piece of legislation?

• (1825)

Mr. James Lunney: Mr. Speaker, indeed I remember the years when the member was chair of the fisheries committee. Actually, in those days he was pretty collegial, for the most part, on fisheries issues. Members from coast to coast have a focus on trying to do what is right for their communities.

However, the member would also know that the Fisheries Act that we deal with in the House is one of the oldest pieces of legislation still in existence. It goes back to 1868. There are all kinds of provisions in there. There are definitions that are outdated. The authorities are not established. For example, aquaculture was not even considered in those days, so the act desperately needs to be updated.

The changes we are introducing will bring reasonable change that will keep the focus on the kinds of water resources that impact the fish that are important to our communities economically. These changes will take the effort off highway people who are trying to replace a culvert or do a little repair on a bridge or a farmer who is trying to drain his flooded land, as has happened recently in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu.

That is what these changes are about. It is time to move ahead.

Mr. Dan Albas (Okanagan—Coquihalla, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member opposite for his speech today. He is a great colleague. I know he has spent a large amount of his time here developing expertise in innovation, specifically in medical innovation.

This budget supports the provinces, as he said in his speech. It supports education, the social transfer and health transfers. However, he also brought up Genome Canada and the important funding that is part of that.

Could the member also explain to me as a new member what that kind of support to research means, not only to science but also to the people across this country?

Mr. James Lunney: Mr. Speaker, our government has been promoting science and technology and being competitive on the world stage through the last number of budgets. It is a knowledge-based economy that drives our economy and gives us an economic advantage. The investments in Genome Canada offer great promise for moving ahead on a number of important issues and understanding how biology works. We are hopeful that it will lead to great

opportunities for Canada and for the Canadian Foundation for Innovation, investments that help stimulate the kinds of improvements that will keep Canadian businesses competitive and leading the world.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Before I invite the hon. member Burnaby—Douglas to resume debate, I will let him know he will have about two and a half minutes, and then I will need to interrupt him.

The hon. member for Burnaby—Douglas.

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am here to speak today about Bill C-38, the budget implementation act. This enormous omnibus bill is a disservice to the House and to Canadians.

Many parts of this huge bill are of concern to my constituents, but one in particular is of concern to them. It is with regard to the changes to the environmental assessment process. To refresh everyone's memory, the Kinder Morgan company currently owns and operates an oil pipeline that transports 300,000 barrels of oil per day between Edmonton and Burnaby. Most of my constituents tolerate this existing pipeline. It supplies oil and gasoline to metro Vancouver and keeps the local refinery in business. They tolerate it because they are not hypocrites; they use oil and support the local supply chain.

However, Kinder Morgan has just formally produced a new proposal to build a new heavy crude oil pipeline to transport 550,000 barrels per day along the existing pipeline route. This will not serve the local population. This will ship oil in raw form by tanker to foreign countries, bring almost 400 new giant oil supertankers to the Burrard Inlet and require massive dredging beneath the Second Narrows Bridge.

It will build a new pipeline along the existing route, which runs through extremely densely populated areas, including Burnaby, Port Moody, Coquitlam, Surrey, Langley, Abbotsford, Kamloops and many other urban centres.

I have walked this route, and much of it goes by shopping malls, housing co-ops, public parks, schools, modest homes and million-dollar mansions. There is a 30-metre right of way required by the National Energy Board, and a 60-metre safety zone. Members can picture a trench as wide as a highway going through many of these urban centres.

More worryingly, the National Energy Board can expropriate lands, and many people in my riding are fearful that they are going to be forced from their homes, schools and community amenities. In fact, the uncertainty surrounding this proposal is already causing property values to drop along this line. These concerns are real. Thousands of local residents oppose this pipeline, and they have contacted me to discuss these changes.

If we turn to the proposals in this giant budget bill, we see that the changes to the Environmental Assessment Act mean that there may not even be public consultation under this act. It is up to the discretion of the minister. Even if there is consultation, it would be limited to 24 months, and then, after the consultation, the minister could simply ignore it.

I urge the government to clarify what its intentions are with specific reference to the Kinder Morgan proposal and I ask it to withdraw it and debate it on a separate occasion.

• (1830)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The hon. member for Burnaby—Douglas will have seven minutes remaining for his speech when the House next debates this bill and, of course, the usual five minutes for questions and comments.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*English*]

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise in the House tonight to speak to an issue that is very important in my riding of Davenport in Toronto and, in fact, an issue of importance right across the country, and that is public transit.

Canada is the only G7 and OECD country to not have a national transit strategy. The government likes to tell Canadians that it is a prudent fiscal manager but at every turn it seems to miss the opportunity to actually support the economy.

In terms of public transit, we are at a tipping point in terms of the investments that need to be made in public transit. The Canadian Urban Transit Association estimates that public transit faces about an \$18 billion gap in infrastructure needs over the next few years. Through the great work of the member of Parliament for Trinity—Spadina, we have long called for a national transit strategy.

This national transit strategy would provide some level of predictability when it comes to transit funding. What happens now is that the municipalities, the transit authorities and the TTC, for example, can perhaps entice the federal government into investing in a capital project. Of course, when the government invests in a capital project, it gets to cut a ribbon.

What is really vital is an investment in the operating costs of transit. What we are seeing right now in municipalities right across the country is a greater share of the overall budget for municipal transit coming from the fare box. Toronto's transit budget has one of the highest percentages coming from the fare box of any municipality in North America. This is a system that really needs some federal attention.

A national public transit strategy makes sound economic sense. We know that businesses like to set up close to good public transit. We know that good public transit is good for the economy and good for the environment. It makes sense for families. It is a pro-transit

Adjournment Proceedings

mode. Increasingly, it is not just big cities, it is suburban municipalities and small towns that are in desperate need of a greater investment and greater attention to this very serious and important issue that we are dealing with right across the country.

• (1835)

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to be in the House again to answer a question by my hon. colleague across the way.

Investments in public transit by our Conservative government have reached unprecedented levels since 2006. Through the building Canada plan and the economic action plan, our government is supporting infrastructure priorities in communities across the country.

Our government has been very clear that we will continue to be a supportive partner of our cities but we know that municipalities are best situated to identify their needs and assess their infrastructure priorities. We will not infringe on provincial or municipal jurisdiction and begin telling our cities what their local infrastructure priorities are. Instead, we will provide predictable and long-term investments for municipalities to use for their own planning and priorities.

In the greater Toronto area, these investments are supporting significant undertakings that are contributing to economic growth and strong communities and that will provide residents and commuters with improved transit options.

An example is the extension of the Spadina subway line north from Downsview Station to the Vaughan Corporate Centre in York region. This 8.6 kilometre expansion will include six subway stations, including a station at York University and a station to provide connections to GO train services. The construction is already under way for this project that benefits from a federal funding contribution of up to \$697 million. The building Canada fund commitment for this project is, by far, the largest contribution to a single project.

A second example is the important revitalization project under way for Union Station. Supported by a federal commitment of up to \$133 million, this project comprises a series of improvements such as enhancing pedestrian circulation and concourse capacity, maintaining the heritage aspects of the station and extending downtown Toronto's underground pedestrian network.

Those are only two examples. The cornerstone program of the economic action plan, that \$4 billion of infrastructure stimulus fund, supported a total of 32 public transit projects in the GTA with federal investments of more than \$100 million.

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Examples of projects include work at the Dufferin Station as part of Toronto's subway station modernization program and the expansion of the Burlington's transit operations centre. In total, the federal commitment toward the expansion and renewal of public transit infrastructure in the GTA is an amount of over \$1.36 billion.

This government also understands the importance of having a predictable source of infrastructure funding that municipalities can count on now and in the future. As such, the gas tax fund is now a permanent source of long-term sustainable funding providing annual funding of \$2 billion to Canadian municipalities. Since 2006, the municipalities of the GTA have used close to \$700 million of their federal gas tax fund allocation toward transit investments.

Taken together, these federal investments represent unprecedented support for our provincial and municipal partners in their efforts to ensure residents of the GTA have safe, reliable and efficient public transit. I would hope that the member across the way would take this into consideration as he talks about the commitment made by this government because it truly is unprecedented and deserves at least a little bit of credit from the member opposite.

Mr. Andrew Cash: Mr. Speaker, it is too late in the day for credit but I will say that I do not dispute any of what my hon. colleague has said. However, I do want to underline that she is talking about apples and I am talking about oranges.

I understand the investment in capital projects but I am talking about the operating costs, which is where we get into a bit of a sticky wicket. For example, when we build and spend money on a subway extension as the member described, where is the plan to afford to run the system?

This is why we need a national public transit strategy. We need to coordinate these things so that when the federal government decides to invest, along with its partners, the provinces and municipalities, in a large transit infrastructure project, all three levels of government understand how we will maintain it and run it. This is the great missing piece right now in our transit puzzle.

• (1840)

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Mr. Speaker, I understand that my colleague from the NDP is new to the House and perhaps he has not had an opportunity to learn about jurisdictional responsibilities. Unfortunately, he does not understand that the jurisdictional responsibilities that he speaks to lies squarely in other jurisdictions and not in the federal jurisdiction.

However, the federal government has been very supportive and has made unprecedented levels of investment in transit systems in recent years.

Since 2006, our government has committed close to \$5 billion for public transit projects through its infrastructure programs. This federal funding has leveraged investments of over \$7 billion from other funding partners in transit systems across the country.

In addition, as I said before, the federal gas tax fund is providing significant stable and dedicated funding for municipalities that provides direct financial support to environmentally sustainable municipal infrastructure projects, including transit infrastructure.

I could continue on and on with the wonderful investments made by this federal government but, unfortunately, my time is up. I hope the member opposite has time to learn about jurisdictional differences and responsibilities.

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bring to the chamber again a concern about job cuts at Service Canada. People who have lost their jobs and have been waiting for up to eight weeks for EI benefits will now see further disservice with the cuts in these processing jobs.

What compounds the problem is that the government has now made a bold statement indicating that it will reduce the turnaround time for labour market opinions so companies can bring in temporary foreign workers. Right now it takes about 120 days to process an LMO. These LMOs will be turned around in 10 days.

Therefore, Canadians who are out of work and who deserve benefits will be put aside so we can take workers in from other countries. Resources will be put toward workers from other countries so that the LMOs can be turned around in 10 days as opposed to 120 days. The government is focusing on that.

The Conservatives have indicated that changes will be made to the EI system. If a job opportunity becomes available, a person receiving benefits must take that job. For example, substitute teachers who are receiving benefits in anticipation of the upcoming year must take a job cutting lettuce in a farmer's field or baiting trawl on a wharf somewhere if such a job becomes available. Those teachers will need to take those jobs as opposed to receiving benefits while waiting for the upcoming year to start.

The government has indicated that front end services will not be touched, that only the back end operations will be touched. It is great to go to a restaurant and have somebody wait on us but we will be waiting a long time if there is nobody in the kitchen preparing the meal.

That is what we are faced with here. The government is saying that the front end will not be touched, and it is saying that with respect to veterans, EI processing and Service Canada positions. That seems to be the line coming out of the government's talking points.

I think members can sense my point. If we cut off the back end, it will not matter how good the front end might be because people will be hurt and it will be people on EI who deserve benefits but are not getting their claims processed on time.

Could the parliamentary secretary tell me where the resources to process those EI claims will come from? Will those Service Canada people be in competition with the people who will be providing labour market opinions? Will they be in competition with people who are trying to deliver on these new EI changes? Where will the resources come from?

Adjournment Proceedings

•(1845)

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague opposite talks about where resources are coming from. This government has ensured that we have put into place resources that can handle the services required by Canadians in a variety of areas. When he talks about EI changes or immigration changes, for example, these are the exact places where the government has looked to find inefficiencies and waste, so we can better use the money the taxpayers provide this government with to provide those services, so the services are going to be there to provide Canadians with what they need.

However, as I listen to my hon. colleague it is so disappointing to hear the Liberal Party. When those members talk about job numbers, they twist the job numbers and talk down to Canadian workers in a way that is really offensive to them.

The economy of Canada is doing well. As I listen to my colleague, for whom I have tremendous respect, when we talk about job numbers it is important to know the facts, so I will present some facts for him.

In recent years, Canada, like the rest of the world, was impacted by the worst global recession since World War II, and our economy has been stronger than all other countries in the G7. With the assistance of our Conservative government's economic action plan, Canada has created nearly 700,000 net new jobs since July 2009. This is the strongest growth in employment among all G7 countries. Ninety per cent of those nearly 700,000 jobs have been full-time positions and more than three-quarters of them have been in the private sector employment regions.

In March alone, I should point out that Canada created an incredible 80,000 net new jobs. Those job numbers were so positive that even the Canadian Labour Congress, which is not traditionally an ally of our Conservative government, was forced to applaud them. It said, "We are very pleased to see that the number of full-time jobs increased in March". One would hope that the Liberal Party of Canada could show the same type of positivity as the Canadian economy grows stronger.

Looking back to 2006 when our Conservative government first took office, the picture gets even better. Since that time, employment in Canada has increased by more than 1.1 million jobs. That is more than one million more Canadians working today than under the former Liberal government. Again, despite the constant bashing by the Liberals, Canada has had the strongest performance of any G7 country since 2006, and the list just goes on.

On economic growth, both the IMF and OECD forecast that we will have among the strongest economic growth in the G7 in the years ahead. On our financial sector, the World Economic Forum has for the fourth straight year rated our banking system the absolute best in the world. On our fiscal situation, Canada has and will continue to have by far the lowest total government debt-to-GDP ratio in the entire G7, based on IMF projections. On fiscal and economic fundamentals, Canada's credit rating is, bar none, one of the best. Moody's, Fitch and Standard & Poor's have affirmed that Canada, unlike numerous other countries, has the highest possible rating by major agencies on our competitiveness, while *Forbes*, the influential business magazine, ranked Canada as the best country in

the world for businesses to grow and create jobs, due primarily to our low-tax plan for Canadian businesses.

What we are not going to do is what is suggested by the Liberal Party: raise corporate taxes, put more increases into CPP, enforce a carbon tax and have an EI 45-day work year. These are things Canadians cannot tolerate and cannot afford and would put our country into some dire straits. We will not do that, and I would hope that our Liberal colleague would listen to some of these benefits and perhaps support us on them as we create more and more jobs.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Mr. Speaker, jobs have been created. We have the Alberta tar sands and we know the way potash is going in Saskatchewan and the way development is. However, let us be truthful about this. Eighty per cent of the newly created jobs have been created in Saskatchewan, Alberta and, to a lesser degree, maybe Newfoundland. If there is any prosperity and any recovery, it is very focused and it is not because of the government but because of the natural resources that are being mined and processed in those particular areas.

I guess it is about those that are not in Alberta and Saskatchewan and Newfoundland right now. It is those who are working in seasonal economies. It is those Canadians who are having trouble paying their power bills and filling the oil tank. They find themselves out of work because they are in a seasonal industry. Is there any chance the government is going to recognize that these people are hard-pressed and that resources have to be placed so these people can be supported? All they want to do is get by and feed their families and be supported through some reinvestment in the public sector, so EI processing can take place in a reasonable period of time.

•(1850)

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to hear the member talk about support for Canadian workers and support for those who are unemployed. If he really was concerned about support for those Canadians, for one thing, economic action plan 2012 is racked full of different supports and mechanisms to ensure these unemployed Canadian workers can get an advantage toward employment.

In fact, let me talk about the measures of economic action plan 2012 that will assist to continue to create jobs. Let us not forget, these are measures that within hours of economic action plan 2012 being released, the Liberal party voted against them. There are things like extending the hiring credit for small business to encourage over 500,000 small businesses hire more workers. That is not about the oil sands. That is not about potash. That is about 500,000 small businesses hiring more workers in provinces like my province of Manitoba.

Adjournment Proceedings

What about him voting against helping more young people get into the workforce, more aboriginal youth getting opportunities, Canadians with disabilities getting into the job market, assisting older workers to keep their skills up to date? That is what he voted against. It is unfortunate, but it will help us create jobs and see our country prosper.

GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very impressed that the Parliamentary Secretary is staying to answer all three questions.

Canadian government scientists are not free to talk about their research. I am not asking for government scientists to have the ability to talk about government policy. I realize this is something that ministers should be doing. However, we are talking about allowing Canadian government scientists to talk about their research. The most famous example was a fishery scientist who published a paper about salmon in the prestigious journal *Science*, which attracted a lot of international attention. Journalists wanted to talk to her to find out more and they were prohibited from doing so.

The government has in the past said that scientists go to conferences, give talks and they can ask questions during the talks. However, those conferences are not accessible to the average Canadian taxpayer. The way that science is accessible to the average Canadian taxpayer is that the journalists get that information and they translate and process that information for the general public. To transfer that information, to really understand something, there has to be a back and forth of questions and answers and more questions and more answers. That is why professors in school tell their students to ask questions, that there is no dumb question. That is why we have debates in the House of Commons and we do not simply lecture each other or read from notes and spout our party's talking points. That is why we have real debates, at least we aspire to have real debates in the House.

There are also resources that are wasted in enforcing the government's communications policy, which is behind this restriction of Canadian government scientists. A great example of that appeared recently when a journalist from the *Ottawa Citizen* tried to find out about a joint study between the NRC in Canada and NASA in the United States. The journalist found out, through an access to information request, that the reason why he did not get information from the Canadian government was that something like 11 staffers spent a whole day exchanging 50 pages of emails to try to figure out what to say to the journalist. In the end, they did not say very much. However, when the journalist phoned NASA, in 15 minutes he found out this was a study about how radar had trouble determining the amount of snowfall.

There is a certain efficiency in just speaking the plain truth. Here we are talking about a lot of taxpayer money being wasted, and I know the parliamentary secretary cares about not wasting taxpayer money.

In the United States, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration allows scientists to talk freely about their research. That was an administrative order that came out the United States administration, because open government is important to it and scientific integrity and public trust is important. That is why it has a

policy that allows its scientists to speak freely about their own research, not policy.

Science journalists are fed up because they cannot get the information they need on a timely basis to do their job. It has also been argued by the government that it is not a big problem, that it is just a small number of pesky journalists complaining. I would remind the House that 40 years ago today there was an investigation of a burglary in the Watergate Hotel and a small number of pesky journalists defended democracy. That is why it is so important to give journalists the information they need to stand on guard for Canadian democracy.

•(1855)

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the truth of the matter is that we all care about the environment. This partisan one-upmanship that happens in the House of Commons, frankly, is nonsense. We all care about the environment and the futures of our children, grandchildren and future generations of Canadians. I want to make that clear right off the bat.

Like all public servants working at Environment Canada, our scientists play a very important role in assisting the minister and discharging his responsibilities to make sure we have a clean, safe and sustainable environment for Canadians. Environment Canada scientists are among the absolute best in the world. They conduct research and perform other scientific duties that inform the minister's policy decisions, identify environmental issues, and help enforce the laws and regulations that protect Canada's environment.

Let us talk about the communications policy. The communications policy of the Government of Canada holds that we provide the public with timely, accurate, clear, objective and complete information about the government's policies, programs and services. As members of Canada's public service and employees of the Government of Canada, Environment Canada scientists are subject to this policy. Environment Canada is very active in discharging the responsibilities laid out in the communications policy. Environment Canada scientists are encouraged to publish the results of their research in peer-reviewed scientific journals. We are very proud of their work, the 684 scientific articles they published and 326 conferences they attended in 2011, and our reputation as one of the top 10 producers of environmental science in the world. We are very proud of that.

As members of Canada's non-partisan professional public service, Environment Canada scientists, like any other public servant, cannot comment on government policy. We have already addressed that they are already commenting on their research. In Canada's democratic system of government, the role of commenting on government policy is reserved for ministers and their designated spokespersons. This is a fundamental tenet of our public service values.

We recognize that the media play an important role in the democratic process by informing the public of government activities. Our response to media inquiries is exemplary. In 2011 alone, Environment Canada received more than 3,100 media calls. Our officials completed over 1,200 media interviews, and responded in writing to media questions. Environment Canada welcomes the interests of Canadians in our environmental science and will continue to disseminate the results of our work by presenting and publishing it in an open and timely way.

Let no one in the House say that our scientists are not allowed to brag about the accomplishments they have made. They do, and I have cited a number of examples of the way they do that. We as the government will follow the policies that are in place and provide Canadians with the information they need to know that this government is taking the environment very seriously and doing what it takes to make sure it is preserved for generations to come.

Mr. Ted Hsu: Mr. Speaker, at the last minute I have decided to change what I was going to ask. Let me ask the parliamentary secretary a very simple yes or no question.

Adjournment Proceedings

Will the government allow me, as somebody with a doctorate in physics who can talk science, to speak to any government scientist about science?

• (1900)

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Mr. Speaker, the member has the right to speak to whomever he wants. He is a Canadian. In Canada, people have the right to ask questions and speak freely. No one is removing his right to do any of that. However, he must follow the communications policy within the Government of Canada. That is all that is being asked.

I would encourage the member to also be truthful. I know the member is very honourable. I know the member has at the heart of his comments the environment of this country. I respect that. I too have that in my heart of hearts. I intend to continue to work with this government to secure that. No one is asking that any rights of any Canadian be removed. However, I would encourage him to follow the rules set out by the Government of Canada.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:01 p.m.)

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