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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, March 27, 2013

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, March 27, 2013

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

• (1405)

[*English*]

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

[*Members sang the national anthem*]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

RIGHT TO EDUCATION IN FRENCH IN SASKATCHEWAN

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the teaching situation for students at École Boréale in Saskatchewan is deplorable. Although the school is a priority of the Conseil des écoles francophones, the Government of Saskatchewan is refusing to provide the infrastructure required for the students' education.

However, this French-language secondary school could potentially have over 400 students, but today only three students have agreed to put up with this contempt. The other students and their families have resigned themselves to attending English-language schools. In Quebec, we treat the historic anglophone minority with respect and dignity. Why this double standard?

Samantha, Ryan and Jonathan are true heroes. These young people have persisted over time, come hell or high water, to assert their right to education in French. They are proof that Canada does not treat all its children the same way.

I salute their courage, their determination and especially the strength of their commitment to a cause that transcends boundaries, the cause of dignity and the right to live in one's own language.

To these young people and to all francophones outside Quebec, I say, "Your fight is our fight, brothers and sisters."

[*English*]

LEADER OF THE NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after days of widespread criticism against the opposition's attack on Canada's national interests, senior NDP officials have finally begun to speak out.

In his first week on the job, Saskatchewan's NDP leader, Cam Broten, stood up against the Leader of the Opposition when he publicly stated:

I support the Keystone XL pipeline because of a triple bottom line assessment looking at environmental, economic and social reasons....

However, we all know the Leader of the Opposition is not listening to his provincial counterparts. He is too busy taking his marching orders from big union bosses who do not support high-paying unionized jobs in Saskatchewan's natural resource sector.

The Saskatchewan people will never support his policy of paying for massive increases in government spending through carbon taxing the Saskatchewan economic boom, nor will they ever endorse an NDP leader who has trashed high-paying unionized natural resource jobs during his meetings with U.S. congressional leaders in Washington.

Saskatchewan Premier Brad Wall has it right. The Leader of the Opposition has betrayed Canada's national interests.

* * *

[*Translation*]

THE BUDGET

Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in the riding of Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, as in the rest of Canada, people are crippled by unemployment. People who lose their jobs often find themselves with no future.

It would have been useful to have a plan to create jobs and measures to modernize our waste water treatment infrastructure and increase public transit in the suburbs, but there is nothing, no effort whatsoever.

What is worse, this budget attacks measures that were helping in combatting the economic downturn. It reduces credit unions' ability to support small business. The Conservatives are also attacking labour-sponsored funds, which support venture capital, and stunting regional economic growth.

Statements by Members

Changes to job training will once again force the provinces to do more with less—more austerity and more of the load to carry. Why sabotage something that is working?

If you cannot help, at least do no harm. We needed this ideology-driven budget like we needed a hole in the head.

* * *

FRANCO-ONTARIAN NEWSPAPER

Mr. Royal Galipeau (Ottawa—Orléans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the future belongs to those who fight. A century ago today, the first issue of the daily newspaper *Le Droit* rolled off the presses.

Created by laymen and Oblates in reaction to the hated Regulation 17, the purpose of this newspaper was to support continued education in French in Ontario.

Since then, *Le Droit* has become a unifying force for Canada's francophones in minority situations.

[English]

My grandmother learned to read by perusing its pages, and so did I. I was their paper boy from 1959 to 1964 and served as a summer correspondent in 1967.

[Translation]

Le Droit enabled Ontario's francophones to get quality information on both world wars, on linguistic minority struggles and on the decisions of the last 30 federal parliaments.

To the people who put this newspaper together, congratulations and thank you for contributing to the French fact in Ontario.

Certantibus Futura.

* * *

[English]

AUTISM

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, April 2, 2013, will be the first official World Autism Awareness Day in Canada.

Last October, the House passed Liberal senator Jim Munson's bill to mark the day. In 2007, the United Nations declared April 2 as World Autism Awareness Day in order to bring world attention to autism, which affects tens of millions globally.

Persons with autism have told me of the discrimination they face in society. Many of them function well but are often misunderstood. We must understand the nature of autism in its full spectrum. Those with autism always find it difficult to get jobs. They are seen as mentally challenged, when many of them have extraordinarily high IQs.

Awareness and understanding are key to providing the necessary supports that persons with autism need, so they can, wherever possible, function autonomously in society.

Today will be "Light It Up Blue" when landmarks will be lit up in blue, just as BC Place, Rogers Arena and Science World were last year in Vancouver Centre.

Here is to removing the stigma of autism.

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● (1410)

GEORGETOWN CITIZEN OF THE YEAR

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be able to represent the good people of Halton Region and Wellington County in the House of Commons.

Yesterday, the Georgetown Lions Club named Mr. Graeme Goebelle citizen of the year. For 45 years, Graeme has served his community by volunteering with countless organizations and charities. Through his professional and philanthropic endeavours, including the Georgetown Hospital, the Cancer Society, YMCA and many more, Graeme has contributed to making Georgetown the strong community it is today.

It is people like Graeme and his wife Roslyn that make Wellington—Halton Hills one of the best places to live, and why Halton Region and Wellington County have consistently had the lowest crime rates in Canada. In fact, for the last several years *Maclean's* magazine has named Halton Region and Wellington County two of the three safest communities in Canada. Recently, *MoneySense* magazine named Halton Hills the fifth-best small community in Canada.

It is people like Graeme Goebelle who make all the difference. Congratulations to Graeme and his wife Roslyn.

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B.C. FISHERIES

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, constituents in Nanaimo—Cowichan expected to see support for fisheries in this latest budget or, at the very least, some action on the 75 recommendations from the Cohen commission on salmon. Instead, the Conservatives turned their back on B.C. fisheries and fish habitat once again.

After devastating cuts in previous budgets that reduced habitat protection and the number of enforcement officers on the water, the new cuts would reduce front-line services even more. B.C. has seen the Kitsilano Coast Guard station close and regional fisheries offices close in many communities, leaving B.C. with only five offices and the fewest staff since 1983. As well, the consolidation of marine communication traffic services raises concerns that the B.C. coast will not be adequately served.

DFO is the federal department responsible for tsunami debris, especially large pieces that are a hazard to navigation. With the many large resource projects planned in B.C. that need input from DFO staff before proceeding, we need investments in staff, not reductions. Cutting fisheries and habitat protection is the wrong priority for British Columbians.

* * *

PLEASANTDALE SCHOOL

Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I congratulate teacher Sarah Driscoll and the team of grade seven and eight students at Pleasantdale School in Estevan for winning a day with the infamous Rick Mercer on Monday, March 25, and for helping spare children from the ravages of malaria by raising \$5,439 in the Spread the Net student challenge.

They did this through bake sales, penny and bottle drives and a grade seven and eight school dance. As Mercer noted, “Every now and then a school comes along and they punch way above their weight. They raise more money than anyone could ever imagine and Pleasantdale is one of those schools”. He said, and I agreed, “You... are amazing, you raised over \$5,000 and that is over 500 bed nets. That is saving 500 lives, that is twice as many people that are in this school and you...did that for children on the other side of the world”.

For those who wish to watch the program, it will be aired on April 2.

Indeed, congratulations to Pleasantdale School in Estevan and everyone who was involved.

* * *

ABORIGINAL WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Mrs. Stella Ambler (Mississauga South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for more than 25 years, aboriginal women on reserves have been without legal protections that all other women in Canada take for granted, protections they especially need in situations of family violence. When a relationship breaks down, a spouse can ban a woman from her home without her consent.

Aboriginal peoples, international organizations and even the Manitoba NDP have called for this to change. We have introduced matrimonial property rights legislation to protect aboriginal women and give them the same rights as all other women in Canada. This bill would allow judges to enforce emergency protection orders for the safety of the woman and child.

Yet shockingly, the New Democrats and the Liberals are opposing it. This is shameful. First nations women need these rights.

I am proud to say that our Conservative government continues to stand up for aboriginal women.

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[Translation]

FRANCO-ONTARIAN NEWSPAPER

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the newspaper *Le Droit* is celebrating its centennial today. Congratulations.

Statements by Members

Le Droit is the leading source of news for francophones in the Outaouais and Ontario. The newspaper was founded when the use of French in Ontario schools was banned, and ever since then it has been involved in all battles to defend the francophone community.

As representatives of the region, the members for Gatineau, Hull—Aylmer and Ottawa Centre join me in thanking the newspaper for always being the standard-bearer for the francophone cause.

Over the years, *Le Droit* has been able to reinvent itself and remain faithful to its readers without compromising its main mission: providing information. Thanks to the great work of the people who put the newspaper together, it has built a solid reputation for independence and rigour. Its daily coverage of political, economic and cultural news speaks for itself. The best compliment we can pay to *Le Droit* is to say that it has remained faithful to the people who live here, especially through its extensive coverage of local events.

The entire NDP team joins us in congratulating the artisans, past and present, who have made *Le Droit* an authoritative news source for 100 years.

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●(1415)

[English]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Rodney Weston (Saint John, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our Conservative government is proud to stand in support of Canada's natural resource sector and the thousands of Canadians it employs. Our support is in stark contrast to that of the leader of the NDP, who attacks the growth of this sector as a disease and goes to Washington and claims that Canadians are against pipeline projects.

The fact is that my constituents in Saint John and families right across New Brunswick stand with our Conservative government in support of a west-east pipeline. This pipeline will bring jobs, economic growth and long-term prosperity to New Brunswick and all of Canada. Our Conservative government supports this project and, unlike the leader of the NDP, we will be unabashed in our support in New Brunswick, Ottawa and on the world stage.

* * *

[Translation]

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to draw parliamentarians' attention to Amnesty International's “I love my body, my rights” campaign on sexual and reproductive rights.

Statements by Members

The purpose of this campaign, which is running throughout 2013, is to raise public awareness of forced marriage and pregnancy. Many activities have been organized in order to prepare for the International Conference on Population and Development, which is scheduled for 2014 and will focus on women's rights.

Even today, 10 million young girls under the age of 18, sometimes even as young as seven or eight, are forced into marriage without their consent, usually to much older men. They are then often forced to get pregnant, which frequently puts their health and life at risk.

As parliamentarians and as citizens first and foremost, we cannot accept this. We must fight these manifest injustices and do everything we can to protect women's rights.

* * *

[English]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Joyce Bateman (Winnipeg South Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, thanks to our government, the economic action plan has introduced the largest long-term federal commitment to infrastructure in our nation's history: \$70 billion over the next 10 years. No wonder the FCM said that our budget delivered significant gains for Canada's cities and communities. Investment in Canada's public infrastructure will create jobs, economic growth and provide a high-quality of life for families across Canada.

[Translation]

Through our investments in infrastructure, the average age of public infrastructure has dropped from 17 to 14 years.

Over the next two years, we will invest close to \$10 billion in infrastructure. That is more than the previous Liberal government spent in the 13 long years it was in office.

[English]

The municipalities are on board with our infrastructure plan. Will the NDP do the same for Canadians?

* * *

PARLIAMENTARY BUDGET OFFICER

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to Kevin Page, Canada's first parliamentary budget officer. The PBO was created to expand public access to information. Mr. Page was, and remains, perfect for that role. He is a talented economist with a deep understanding of government finances. Canadians knew that they could count on him for the real numbers, whether it was on F-35s, Afghanistan, the sustainability of the OAS or by how much EI rates would actually go up.

As the PBO, Mr. Page consistently defended the right of Canadian taxpayers to know how their money was being spent. He went to court so that the law which would give us that right to information would be enforced. He stood up to protect the vital role of Parliament and its power over the purse, a power that is the foundation of our democracy and our Constitution.

Kevin Page is a public servant in the very best sense of the phrase: always placing the public good before any personal career ambitions.

We thank Kevin Page for serving Canadians with such honour and courage.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Corneliu Chisu (Pickering—Scarborough East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government remains focused on what matters to Canadians, the economy. Last week, the Minister of Finance stood in the House and delivered Canada's economic action plan 2013, a plan for jobs, growth and long-term economic prosperity.

Constituents in my riding were happy to hear of the support for apprentices, expanded support for small businesses, investment in world-class research and innovation and tariff relief on baby clothing and sports and athletic equipment.

Unfortunately, the Leader of the Opposition and his party have been busy focusing their priorities elsewhere. Their plan is for \$56 billion in reckless spending, a \$20 billion job-killing carbon tax, trash talking Canada on the international stage and supporting cop shooters like Gary Freeman.

While we on this side of the House have a real plan for hard-working Canadians, the Leader of the Opposition and his party seem to have their priorities mixed up. We will continue to work hard for Canadians and remain focused on the economy.

* * *

• (1420)

[Translation]

CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA

Ms. Mylène Freeman (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, NDP): Mr. Speaker, although I have received numerous compliments on my tourtière, no one has ever told me it would make me a wonderful wife. I must admit that I have never had the opportunity to cook for the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, who would fit right in on *Mad Men* with his view of women.

This vision unfortunately represents the Conservatives' philosophy. They are remaining silent on this issue, and meanwhile, the member for Langley is leading a backbench revolt. He is openly calling for more freedom so that he can attack a woman's right to choose.

Canadians deserve better than a party torn between its old macho men making sexist comments and these young men trying to trample on women's rights.

This saga makes it clear that it is the Prime Minister's Office in Ottawa that decides what will be said in Saskatchewan, Alberta and the Yukon.

The NDP is pro-choice. We believe in a woman's right to choose and in an MP's right to freedom of expression.

Oral Questions

[English]

WORLD AUTISM AWARENESS DAY

Hon. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Mill Woods—Beaumont, CPC): Mr. Speaker, April 2 is World Autism Awareness Day and 15 years since my son Jaden was diagnosed. As I have shared many times here, life with autism really is an adventure, unique for every family living with it.

Our world today is one in which our 13-year-old daughter babysits our 17-year-old son, a world in which I often discover my iPad YouTube viewing history filled with Barney episodes and home video clips of airplane takeoffs and landings posted by random strangers from around the globe, a world in which visitors to our home experience odd and memorable moments, like the dinner this past summer when Jaden suddenly decided to guzzle Italian salad dressing straight from the bottle.

From time to time, when I tell someone Jaden has autism, they will mention *Rain Man* and ask if he has some kind of special power. The answer, of course, is yes. No matter what someone's mood is, he can bring a moment of complete joy without uttering a single word.

I have even seen him bring members from all sides of this crazy place together on occasion, and I cannot think of a more special power than that.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

TAXATION

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, despite the finance minister's claims, there are tax hikes worth billions of dollars in his latest budget.

He should read the second annex to the budget: a tax on credit unions, a tax on safety deposit boxes and a tax on hospital parking.

The Prime Minister promised that there would be no tax hikes.

Why did he let his Minister of Finance contradict him?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the exact opposite is true.

I know that the NDP wants to increase the GST for consumers across Canada. It wants to raise taxes for job creators and, more specifically, it advocates a carbon tax of more than \$20 billion.

Our commitment, recognized today by the OECD, is to balance the budget while keeping federal taxes low.

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, with answers like that, it is no wonder Conservative backbenchers are revolting.

New customs tariffs will increase product prices across the board.

The Conservatives are also looking to take \$205 million from credit union customers and millions of dollars more from those who are sick and from their families who use hospital parking.

Why did the Prime Minister not keep his promise?

● (1425)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know that the NDP is in favour of raising taxes in order to sink us deeper in debt and increase spending. However, that is not what Canadians want.

Today the OECD indicated that Canada is keeping its taxes low. That is our commitment to the Canadian people.

[English]

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I understand why the government's backbench is frustrated. Answers like that have been frustrating me for quite some time.

The truth is clearly spelled out in black and white on pages 331 and 332. This is not a make-believe tax, unlike the kind the Conservatives love to accuse us of; these are billions in actual new taxes that will impact real people.

With all these half truths, can the Prime Minister not understand why Canadians are angry and his backbench is frustrated?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we will have a vote on the budget tonight, a budget that has been very well-received by Canadians.

I know we will have very strong support on this side of the House. I hope members on that side of the House will finally give up these attempts to convince people they would somehow be better off with higher taxes, somehow be better off at raising tax rates on employers, somehow better off by hiking the GST back up to 7%, somehow better off by making a carbon tax at \$20 billion.

The OECD and others have recognized that Canada is on the right track, balancing our budget, keeping our debt low and keeping our taxes down.

* * *

ETHICS

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is the Prime Minister who has hit Canadians with higher taxes and his caucus is in revolt.

Speaking of rogue Conservatives, we now have yet another Conservative ethics scandal. We have the ministers of trade, aboriginal affairs and industry who all accepted calls from a former colleague. They received insider information about the joint venture between Progress Energy and the Chinese state-owned Petronas.

There are rules around this kind of behaviour. Why did these ministers not immediately convey this information about these calls to the Ethics Commissioner?

Oral Questions

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in fact, that is exactly what happened. It was this caucus, this party, this government that actually created the Federal Accountability Act back in 2006. We are the ones who created the restrictions on lobbying. We wanted to ensure there was more transparency and accountability. That is exactly what we did.

Members of our caucus reported this matter to the commissioner. We are acting by our own rules. I wish the opposition would do the same thing.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that is the problem. The Conservatives are following their own rules. They are not following the rules that belong to all Canadians. Being Conservatives really does mean that they never have to accept accountability.

This is another blow to the credibility of the Minister of Industry, who is already neck deep in ethical scandals. He has two ethics violations and has two other investigations under way.

Why is the Prime Minister not setting an ethical standard for the members of cabinet?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I already explained, this matter was referred to the ethics commissioner by us. We are following the rules that were duly passed by Parliament.

However, on the other side of the House, that party, the NDP caucus, had a \$300,000 payment by the unions, contrary to our laws, contrary to the finances act. That is its record. I will put our record against its record any day of the week.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Toronto Centre.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, they may want to wait for the question before they stand up and applaud.

I would like to ask the Prime Minister a question, and I have a simple proposal to make to him. We have had the leader of the Democrats in the House of Representatives say that her understanding from a recent conversation with the leader of the New Democratic Party was that Canadians were opposed to the pipeline to the United States. I wonder if the Prime Minister would consider this. Instead of simply having hockey coaches talk to the President of the United States about the importance of this issue, would the Prime Minister consider leading a delegation of team Canada, members of this House who agree that this is an important question for Canada and the premiers of Canada? Would the Prime Minister consider leading that delegation?

● (1430)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can certainly assure the leader of the Liberal Party that our government is making its views known at every level of the

American government on an ongoing basis on this matter that is important, in our judgment, to trade, to jobs and to energy security on both sides of the border.

Obviously, I would be delighted to work with all Canadians who favour these good things for our country. If the leader of the Liberal Party could point me to any, I would certainly be willing to take that list.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, sometimes tough economic times create opportunities.

We have premiers going to Washington as private individuals, and others are as well. I think it is important that the United States is fully aware that it is in Canada's national interest to have the opportunity to export what we produce in this country to the United States and elsewhere.

Why not have a real team Canada, one that includes members of the opposition, premiers and other people, under the leadership of the Prime Minister of Canada, of course?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can assure the House that this government is coordinating its activities with the other governments in Canada, the vast majority of which strongly support this project. We will continue to convey that message.

Obviously, if the members of the Liberal Party agree and are willing to join in on this effort, I am always happy to accept such an offer of assistance.

[*English*]

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know it is hard for the Prime Minister to believe this, but actually I think this is a good idea. There is no catch to this and no side to this. There is simply a statement that says we have an opportunity to reinforce the importance of the economics of this federation. We have an opportunity to reinforce co-operation between the provinces, between the provinces and the federal government, and dare I say it, even among those in the coalition of the willing in the House who believe that actually getting our products to market is a good idea.

I would like to ask the Prime Minister to lead the way.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said, we are working with every level, with the private sector and with other levels of government, certainly, to communicate this message. I would be delighted, as I said, to work with any members of the Liberal Party who share our objectives.

I think what I am saying to the leader of the Liberal Party is that I think this is a good idea. I wish he had such good ideas a bit earlier.

While I am on my feet, I do want to thank him for his service, for bringing his intellect, his patriotism and his tenacity to the House of Commons.

*Oral Questions***TAXATION**

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, going back to the budget, the Conservatives' doublespeak has reached new heights. After promising no new taxes, pages 331 and 332 of the budget have in fact a long list of tax increases. There are increases to credit unions, new taxes on safety deposit boxes and a \$1.1 billion tax hike on imported consumer goods.

Now that the minister of state has had 24 hours to reflect on yesterday's answers, would he now acknowledge that he was wrong and admit that the budget included new tax hikes?

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the hon. member for getting up to page 331 of the budget.

What I would like to say are the facts, and let us let the facts answer this question. Since 2006, we have actually eliminated 1,900 different tariffs. What has that accomplished? That has provided \$525 million in tax relief every year since then.

That is what we do with taxes. We lower them.

• (1435)

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I guess girls can cook but they cannot read budgets.

Canadians can check for themselves on pages 331 and 332 of the budget. All the new Conservative taxes are laid out there.

Yesterday the minister claimed that no one would find tax increases in this; yet we have found plenty of them. Let me try a specific example. Could the Minister of State for Finance acknowledge that the budget raises taxes on life insurance?

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, as part of our low tax plan we continue to reduce taxes in every way. In fact, \$65 million in tax reductions comes from the six free trade agreements we have signed since forming government. That is over and above the \$525 million that I referred to in the previous answer. That is a grand total of \$590 million in tax relief every year, and I believe that the NDP voted against most of that.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when we see how the cabinet keeps its members from talking, we can understand why the minister of state is avoiding talking about tax hikes in the budget. However, the Conservatives are using these tax hikes to dip into seniors' wallets.

Seniors are more likely to use health services, and they are the ones who will pay for the higher parking taxes when they go to the hospital. Then there is the fact that the Conservatives are raising customs tariffs on everyday products.

Why are the Conservatives raising taxes on products and services that seniors use?

[*English*]

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, one thing that has been overlooked by the opposition is the fact that we are supporting palliative care in the budget. We have a very good program that was initiated at the hospital here in Ottawa.

That is helping with end-of-life care for seniors. That is pretty important.

To answer specifically the hon. member's question, these are companies that are supplying parking to hospitals and they were getting a special tax reduction. We do not think that is necessary.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, unlike some of his colleagues, the minister of state can still talk about his file. Congratulations. However, could he stop changing the subject?

Raising taxes on credit unions is bad news for seniors because many of them are members. Their dividends will be taxed, as will their life insurance premiums, most likely. If the Conservatives are wondering where I got this information, they can take a look at pages 367 and 368 of their own budget.

Why is the minister of state not aware of the contents of his own budget? Why is he saying that taxes are not being raised?

[*English*]

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, speaking of credit unions, I would remind the members of the official opposition that in budget 2010 they actually voted against both of those budget implementation acts. We actually approved what the credit unions had asked us for. As credit unions are growing, and we continue to support credit unions, they actually wanted to be federally regulated. We put that in the budget.

We support credit unions, unlike the opposition.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of State is skating around this issue, so it is no surprise that there is a snowstorm of opposition to the Conservatives in Quebec that is snowballing across the country.

The Minister of Finance was clear. He said that he would not increase taxes. The Prime Minister was clear. He said that he would not increase taxes, yet this Conservative budget includes new taxes on hospital parking, labour-sponsored funds, credit unions, bicycles, safety deposit boxes and small businesses. The Conservatives and the Minister of State flat out deny what is on pages 331 and 332 of the budget.

My question is simple. Why are the Conservatives refusing to tell Canadians the truth?

[*English*]

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are happy to tell Canadians the truth.

The fact is, we have reduced 150 different taxes for Canadians. The average Canadian family of four is paying \$3,200 less every year.

Oral Questions

I will quote the OECD from today that says:

Canada has, over the last five or six years, already decreased the tax burden on low incomes a lot, especially for families with children.

•(1440)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was wondering how the Minister of State would be able to defend the indefensible. He does so by talking about anything but the 2013 budget.

The Minister of State for Finance is repudiating the work done by the Minister of Finance. He is repudiating the taxes in the 2013 budget. He would rather make up stories about a future NDP government's policies than talk about the tax hikes his government put in this budget.

The Conservatives owe it to Canadians to be honest. Will they have the courage to do so, or will they continue to deny the truth?

[*English*]

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the reality is that the opposition actually has the opportunity this evening to support the budget and support the accelerated capital cost allowance for small businesses. Why did we put that in the budget? It is because businesses asked for it. Businesses want to expand and grow their opportunities in this country.

There is a lot in this budget that Canadians asked for. We have never had a budget with so much broad support across the country. The only people who seem to be opposed to this budget are those sitting opposite.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that is nonsense.

Let me tell it like it is. The only real reason the Conservatives are abolishing the labour-sponsored funds tax credit is because the funds are a union initiative. They could not care less about how these funds benefit economic development or help people save. A workers' group is dangerous to them.

Even Canada's Venture Capital and Private Equity Association is denouncing the Conservatives' decision. The association does not understand the mixed signals the Conservatives are sending.

Like the association, the NDP wonders why the Conservatives are attacking investments in our own backyard.

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of State (Small Business and Tourism), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not understand why my colleague is against this measure, which is good for small investors. Investors in Canada and Quebec will stop subsidizing very well-capitalized labour-sponsored funds to the tune of \$140 million a year.

Now, these labour-sponsored funds will have to be competitive and have good returns to attract their investor clients. My colleagues opposite should support this measure, which is good for entrepreneurs and small investors.

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister seems a bit angry and frustrated, much like one of his party's backbenchers.

While the government is increasing taxes on hospital parking, safety deposit boxes, small businesses, credit unions and groceries, it is still not imposing sanctions on people who evade taxes. Their figures on tax evasion do not cut it.

How can the Conservatives claim to be combatting tax evasion while they are making cuts to the Canada Revenue Agency's budget?

[*English*]

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of National Revenue and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are keeping tax rates low by closing tax loopholes and making the system fairer for Canadians. We will launch the stop international tax evasion program to improve identification of tax evasion to protect honest Canadians. Since 2006, our government has introduced more than 75 measures to improve the integrity of our tax system.

If opposition members are serious about cracking down on tax evasion, then they will support our budget.

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, they are making up numbers on tax cheats, making up answers about tax increases and even their own backbenchers do not trust the Prime Minister.

The reality is, Conservatives are raising taxes on almost everything while cutting the people who go after tax cheats. How can they expect any credibility with their claims of cracking down on enforcement when \$100 million is being cut from the CRA and 3,000 staff are being eliminated?

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of National Revenue and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to ensuring value for Canadian taxpayers' money, and not one audit position will be eliminated. As a matter of fact, we will add to those positions. That is why, since 2007-08, we have reduced spending on overhead activities, such as travel and office supplies, hospitality and consultants.

Budget 2013 savings apply only to our internal operations, such as administrative costs. That is why we do expect the opposition to support our budget, because it is good value for taxpayers.

* * *

•(1445)

[*Translation*]

THE BUDGET

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the budget is always important to Quebecers, but this one contains two items that are going to cause them some serious problems.

Oral Questions

The first problem is the attack on labour-sponsored funds, which have provided an important foundation for venture capital in the province of Quebec.

The second major problem is that the government is spending less on infrastructure this year than last year, and it will spend even less next year.

Those are the two major problems that this budget poses for Quebecers.

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have spoken with a number of municipal representatives in Quebec in the past few hours about the new infrastructure plan, and that is not how they are interpreting things. People see this as the largest plan Canada has ever seen.

As far as investment in infrastructure is concerned, the current building Canada program will come to an end on March 31, 2014, and the new plan will be ready on April 1, 2014. We hope that every province will sign on as soon as possible.

[English]

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the answer from the minister, but the fact remains that in 2013-14, that is to say the fiscal year under way, the government is actually going to be spending \$1.5 billion less in the fund that last year was \$1.7 billion. This year it is simply going to be \$200 million.

How can the minister stand up and say this is great news for the municipalities, when, in fact, they are going to be spending \$1.5 billion less?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague knows very well that in Quebec, we cannot work directly with municipalities. We have to go through the province. Municipalities have to send their projects to the province, and the province sends the projects to the federal government. We pay when we receive the invoices, and that is that.

If the province does not send us the invoice at the right time, we will pay it later. That is just cash management.

[Translation]

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will give the minister another chance to explain to people why the government will be spending \$200 million under budget 2013-14, when it spent \$1.7 billion last year.

The minister must recognize that having less money in this year's budget than in last year's is a problem. In our opinion, that is what is wrong with the government's plan.

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the building Canada fund, which was

launched in 2007 and will end on March 31, 2014, provided \$33 billion. The money that is being invested this year came from that program.

Our new program is for April 1, 2014, and subsequent years. As I said, in Quebec, the federal government cannot work directly with municipalities. Municipalities in Quebec have to send their projects to the Government of Quebec, which sends the invoice to the federal government. We pay the province when we receive the invoice.

* * *

[English]

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, under the Conservative government, the situation for first nations students on reserve is only getting worse. A new report released yesterday shows that some on-reserve schools are receiving almost 50% less than the provincial schools, and yet the budget did not include any money to close this increasing funding gap.

The government has an obligation to fund first nations students at an equitable rate. Why are Conservatives ignoring the funding needs of on-reserve schools and the students?

Mr. Greg Rickford (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we spend an average of approximately \$13,500 per student on reserve, and this is comparable to provincial funding for education.

In last year's budget, we invested significant resources for first nations education, and the opposition voted against it. Tonight they have a chance to redeem themselves by voting in favour of first nations education in Canada's economic action plan, version 2013.

[Translation]

Mr. Jonathan Genest-Jourdain (Manicouagan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on the other side of the House, there is no political will to establish a respectful relationship with aboriginal peoples. The new minister's rhetoric does not compensate for the budget's silence on aboriginal affairs. The Assembly of First Nations is holding a forum on treaties right now as a follow-up to the January 11 meeting. However, we still do not know which of the Conservatives is responsible for following up.

Who is responsible for following up on the commitments made at the January 11 meeting, and what will be the final result?

Oral Questions

●(1450)

Mr. Greg Rickford (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government's plan focuses on jobs, growth and prosperity for everyone, including aboriginal peoples. Responsible resource development should include aboriginal peoples, especially in northern Canada.

That is why we are maintaining our shared priorities such as education and the allocation of new resources for skills training.

Unfortunately, the NDP is more interested in increasing the cost of living for Canadians living in northern areas with its carbon tax. Treating the forestry and mining industries like a disease and going abroad—

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. member for Beauharnois—Salaberry.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP): Mr. Speaker, even with a new Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, we are not seeing any meaningful results.

Muzzling scientists, refusing to combat climate change and doing away with the round table on the environment and the economy were not enough for the Conservatives. Now, they want to attack the two decades of work done by this independent research group and the findings it made.

Will the minister get rid of all the environmental policy recommendations that he does not like before putting this research on the Internet or will he respect the integrity of this research?

[*English*]

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague has completely mis-characterized reality. In fact, the national round table's entire e-collection has been distributed to over 20 libraries, including university libraries, across the country. As well, all national round table web holdings will be archived on the Library and Archives Canada website. As well, all official NRTEE publications have been uploaded, in both official languages, onto three online virtual libraries.

Our government is proud of our capacity to protect both the environment and the economy.

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we know that the only time the Conservatives talk about the environment is in television ads.

It should come as no surprise that Canadians no longer have any confidence in this Conservative government.

The Conservatives have a tendency to make compromising information disappear. Let us not forget about the sudden disappearance of the word “environment” from the Navigable

Waters Protection Act website. They are preparing to do the same thing again.

It is time that the Conservatives stopped muzzling scientists who do not support their policies.

Will the minister commit to protecting and releasing all the documents resulting from the 25 years of research conducted by the round table on the environment and the economy?

[*English*]

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think I followed my colleague through that rambling question.

As I just said, the national round table e-collection is being distributed to over 20 libraries, including university libraries, right across the country. At the same time, all round table web holdings are quite appropriately being archived on the Library and Archives Canada website.

I am pleased to see this body of work preserved and available, as it should be, through university libraries.

* * *

JUSTICE

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are concerned about crime.

The Ontario Superior Court today released a decision in the matter of R. v. Kachkar. Mr. Kachkar was found not criminally responsible by the court.

Could the Minister of Justice please provide the government's position on cases where individuals are found not criminally responsible?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while we do not comment on specific cases, I can say the government is taking action with regard to accused individuals found not criminally responsible. The not criminally responsible reform act would ensure that the protection of the public is paramount, create a new designation for high-risk individuals, and ensure that victims have a greater voice in Canada's justice system. This is in addition to the 30 measures we have already passed to keep our streets and communities safe.

Canadians can rest assured that this government will continue to stand up for the victims of crime.

* * *

[*Translation*]

REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there are three unmistakable landmarks no matter where you go in Quebec: a church, a “caisse pop” and a post office.

We are not going to talk about churches because they are not a political issue.

However, in the 2013 budget, the Conservatives are directly attacking caisses populaires—credit unions—and, since 2012, the post offices have been paying for the Conservatives' relentlessness. Sixteen post offices in Quebec have closed in less than a year, and the epidemic is still raging.

What will be left of our regions once the Conservatives have finished their dirty work?

• (1455)

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as my colleague knows quite well, the Canada Post Corporation is an organization that operates according to the rules set by its board of directors.

It is important to remind these people that the Canada Post Corporation is having to deal with a 20% drop in its market in recent years. In 2011, it had an operating deficit of \$253 million.

They would resolve this by devising a \$21 billion carbon tax. As for us, we will let that organization make courageous decisions to secure the future of the postal service across Canada.

* * *

CANADA POST

Ms. Paulina Ayala (Honoré-Mercier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, people in my riding are writing to me to ask why the Conservative government is shutting down their post office. Since the beginning of last year, 30 post offices across Canada have been shut down, including 16 in Quebec and no fewer than 10 in Montreal.

We know that the Prime Minister prefers FedEx, but why does he want to prevent people from using Canada Post's countrywide service?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think that it is important to tell the hon. member exactly what the situation is with the postal service and Canada Post, a crown corporation that operates independently and makes difficult business decisions.

I said earlier that Canada Post had an operating deficit of \$253 billion in 2011. If my colleague would like, I can send her the figures by Purolator.

Mr. Réjean Genest (Shefford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government is quietly privatizing Canada Post. Canadians want to keep their post offices because this is a local service that is important to them and their businesses. Closing post offices for ideological reasons is hurting our regions' economy.

Can the minister tell us how many more Canada Post offices the Conservatives are going to close?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and President of the Queen's Privy Council for

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Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is hard for the NDP when we talk about the economy. Every time a difficult decision has to be made, it becomes ideological. Everything is always about ideology to them. In my opinion, an operating deficit of \$253 million is not an ideological matter but an economic one.

We are going to let the people at Canada Post make the decisions and ensure the sustainability of postal service across this country for a long time to come.

[English]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, crown corporations under the government are in a stranglehold. They are not at arm's-length from the government.

After serving the community for 100 years, Canada Post announced the closing of the Sandwich Towne post office, a disrespectful move, considering the community has offered to work with Canada Post to find a solution, but to the tin ear of the Ottawa Conservatives, the community's concerns simply go unnoticed.

Why is the government so callous about these service cuts? Why is it ignoring students, seniors and persons with disabilities being hurt by these reckless Conservative cuts?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, he can say what he wants, but as a crown corporation, Canada Post operates at arm's-length from the federal government. As such, Canada Post has assured me that all permanent employees will continue to have jobs and will continue to work for the Canadian population, but as I said, they have to face very difficult times, because their market has decreased by 20% since 2007, and that is not an easy situation for them.

* * *

ELECTIONS CANADA

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the Prime Minister has considered again the question of the power of Elections Canada with respect to the issue of Peter Penashue, the former member of the Conservative Party. I would like to ask the Prime Minister whether he would now reconsider the wisdom of calling a byelection just at the time when Mr. Penashue's investigation under Elections Canada is still going on.

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, I too would like to add my thanks to that member as he poses yet another final question as leader of the Liberal Party.

On the question at hand, we have in Labrador a great leader in Peter Penashue, who has delivered jobs for his constituents through the Lower Churchill project. He has stood firm in his support of the abolition of the long gun registry and has defended the polar bear hunt and the seal hunt. He is a great defender of rural rights and rural values, and we are confident that he will be returned to this place to continue his good work.

Oral Questions

● (1500)

JUSTICE

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, President Clinton, President Obama and Prime Minister David Cameron have all indicated that over the last few years, they have had a change of heart on the subject of gay marriage. In light of the fact that there are today thousands of Canadian couples who have celebrated their relationships, and those relationships have been recognized by the provinces, by the states and by civil authorities, could the Prime Minister tell us whether he, in fact, has had a similar change of heart to his colleagues around the western world?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as members know, there is legislation before Parliament right now that deals with this issue.

I would hope that the members of the opposition would get on board with us and get that thing passed through Parliament. That is what we all should be doing in that area.

* * *

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier-Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when the Minister of Finance went to South Korea to avoid talking about his budget, he claimed that Canada was close to signing a free trade agreement with that country. However, negotiations have been deteriorating for years and are far from over. With the Conservatives at the helm, Canada's trade surplus has turned into a \$67 billion annual trade deficit.

When will the Conservatives admit that they have failed to put in place a trade policy that benefits Canadians?

[English]

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is pretty rich for NDP members to stand in this House and claim that they support trade.

They send their leader down to the United States, where he ignores all of the science on the Keystone XL project, undermines our efforts to grow our economy and badmouths Canadians and our economy. In fact, he asks Americans not to do business with Canada.

The NDP is not only anti-trade and not only anti-investment; now it is anti-science and anti-common sense. It has no credibility on trade.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what is hurting the Canadian economy is Conservative incompetence on trade.

The Conservatives' ideological approach to trade is now becoming totally incoherent. The Conservatives say they want to break down barriers, but now announce in the budget that they are hiking tariffs on 72 countries, including Gabon and Botswana, which are hardly developed nations.

Canadians need a consistent trade policy, one that actually delivers good deals for Canada and creates value-added jobs in this country.

Why are Conservatives hurting our businesses and making Canadians pay \$330 million more on thousands of everyday items?

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a surprise to hear that question coming from the NDP. In fact, this is the first question the official critic for trade from the NDP has asked me about trade in four months.

When they claim that they are in favour—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. Order. The hon. Minister of International Trade still has the floor.

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Speaker, when the NDP talks about fair trade, it actually means no trade at all.

Let us think about this: the member for British Columbia Southern Interior recently said that trade agreements threaten the very existence of our nation.

What credibility—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: The hon. member for Prince Albert.

* * *

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for many years we have heard first nations say they want and deserve greater transparency and accountability for their chiefs and council.

Our government introduced the first nations financial transparency act so that first nations members can have access to basic financial information about their elected chiefs and council, access that all other Canadians expect and deserve. Shockingly, the NDP and Liberals opposed this bill.

Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development please update the House on the status of this bill?

Mr. Greg Rickford (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would be happy to. I want to thank the member for Prince Albert for his question.

Despite opposition from the NDP and Liberals, I am pleased to report that we have delivered on our promise to aboriginal communities and their members from across Canada.

The first nations financial transparency act will receive royal assent today. Passage of this legislation into law represents a milestone for first nations community members and leaders who have been calling for this kind of change. We are proud of the work that has been done with first nations to ensure that this legislation will benefit them now and for generations to come.

•(1505)

[Translation]

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a straightforward question for the government. Today, we are hearing rumours that the board of directors plans on changing the name of CBC/Radio-Canada.

Given the reputation of CBC/Radio-Canada, can the government tell us today if the name “CBC/Radio-Canada” will be kept for the years to come?

[English]

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I really hope that is not his last question.

No, the name of CBC/Radio-Canada is not going to change. The name is actually established in the Broadcasting Act, section 35, and we have no plans to change it.

* * *

[Translation]

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. François Lapointe (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in 2008, the member for Lévis—Bellechasse came to Montmagny on behalf of the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

[English]

The Speaker: Order, please. There will be time in a few more minutes to carry on that part of the conversation.

The hon. member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup.

[Translation]

Mr. François Lapointe: Mr. Speaker, in 2008, the member for Lévis—Bellechasse came to Montmagny on behalf of the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food to announce \$3 million in financial assistance for a company called PureCell Technologies Inc.

The company has since changed its name to PurGenesis Technologies. The number of promised jobs has multiplied, yet the factory remains empty.

This program was supposed to help market products that were ready to be put on the shelves. Five years later, the product is not even in production. What is more, PurGenesis Technologies has received another business start-up loan.

Why did PurGenesis Technologies receive financial assistance for a product that was not ready? What mechanisms are in place to ensure that these jobs we have heard so much about will be created?

[English]

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is a repayable loan. The member opposite did allude to that. The company is legally obligated to pay back every cent to Canadian

Oral Questions

taxpayers. It also falls under clear-cut audits that are currently under way to make sure that all of that money was spent properly. We look forward to those jobs filling that building in the near future.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Hon. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the oil sands are an absolutely incredibly important resource that creates thousands of jobs and growth right across this country. While the NDP leader attacks the growth in this sector and actually calls it a disease, the Conservative government keeps fighting for jobs in the building trades, jobs in manufacturing and jobs in the local economy.

My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. Can he update the House on the latest development in our government's efforts to create jobs and grow the economy in Canada's resource sector?

Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the U.S. defence department released a study that concluded that the oil sands would have no significant effect on the environment. This is yet more independent evidence that Keystone is environmentally sound. Unfortunately, the NDP leader rejects the science behind Keystone and instead flies to Washington to attack Canadian jobs and our national interests.

On this side of the House, we support science, jobs and Canadian prosperity.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, confidential documents on the Giant Mine cleanup demonstrate it actually costs less to protect the environment than to just let polluters off the hook. The Treasury Board now pegs the cost of cleanup of the arsenic trioxide at double the government's previous claim, \$903 million.

Will the government admit it is wrong? Protecting the environment protects the taxpayer as well. For \$1 billion, surely we can find a better way to treat this poison other than freezing it underground.

Mr. Greg Rickford (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is clear that the need to clean up this mine is urgent. That is why we have taken immediate action to address some of the urgent needs, and we are working to ensure that a full remediation is put in place. We expect to receive the report from the Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board very soon and we will continue to take the necessary steps to protect the health and safety of workers in nearby communities.

Tributes

[*Translation*]

AIR CANADA

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ): Mr. Speaker, after being brutally thrown out on the street—in violation of the Air Canada Public Participation Act—and after being forced to go before the courts to have their rights recognized, while Ottawa defended Air Canada's untenable position, the former Aveos workers are now the victims of the federal government's dogged determination.

The government is demanding that they repay their employment insurance benefits on the pretext that they received compensation from Air Canada eight months after the sudden closure of Aveos. That is a betrayal. How shameful.

Will this government stop attacking workers?

● (1510)

[*English*]

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we sympathize with those who have lost their jobs through no fault of their own. EI is made available to eligible individuals in a timely manner because of the amount of time that it takes to finalize bankruptcy proceedings. Individuals are made aware that any severance that they receive in a bankruptcy process will be considered earnings and, therefore, could be deducted from their EI.

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HON. MEMBER FOR TORONTO CENTRE

The Speaker: Pursuant to order made on Friday, March 22, the House will now proceed to tributes for the hon. member for Toronto Centre.

I will recognize the hon. member for Wascana.

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for the next few minutes the House will be focusing some attention on the hon. member for Toronto Centre.

[*Translation*]

He certainly does not need our help to draw attention, but today, his last day in the House as leader of the Liberal Party, he deserves a tribute.

[*English*]

Amid all the eulogistic things that are likely to be said today, I remind members at the outset that the MP for Toronto Centre is not dead, neither will he be retiring anytime soon. He is just changing roles.

We are going to pay a tribute to him because, and I hate that word “interim”, his leadership over the past 22 months has been anything but interim. It has been robust and unstinting, skilful and substantive, and readily applauded by the media, the public, our caucus, the party and indeed by his opponents in the House.

In the middle of his job as leader, we named him Canada's parliamentarian of the year. When I say “we”, I mean all of us in this House together. His peers in all parties voted him number one. God knows the Liberal Party could not have stacked that vote. We were

not that organized even when we were in government. That parliamentarian of the year award, amidst all our travails as the so-called third party is a large and unique signal of the respect the member for Toronto Centre has earned across the partisan divide.

As members can imagine, our national Liberal caucus meeting this morning was filled with many emotions as we thanked our leader for the work that he has done over the past two years or so, years that were both difficult and crucial but not without a bit of humour. Like Bette Midler, the MP for St. Paul's over there gushed this morning that the leader has been the “wind beneath [her] wings”. However, the member for Cape Breton—Canso said that maybe someone just passed a bit of gas.

The leader himself addressed the caucus with some poetry. “You, the unwilling,” he said, “led by the all-knowing, are doing the impossible for the ungrateful. We have done so much for so long with so little, we now feel qualified to do anything with nothing”.

He went on to say, “I know I have not answered all of your questions. The answers I have given only serve to raise big new problems. In some ways, I feel just as confused as ever, but I believe I am now confused on a higher plane and about more important things”. It was indeed quite a caucus meeting.

As other parties in the House like to remind us, the Liberal Party has endured some difficult times since the election of May 2011, perilous times because survival was not guaranteed. More than anyone else, the member for Toronto Centre has given the Liberal Party the opportunity to have a future.

[*Translation*]

More than anyone, the hon. member for Toronto Centre has given the Liberal Party hope for the future.

● (1515)

[*English*]

He was the right person in the right place at a critical time. With his deep well of experience, his storehouse of knowledge, his understanding and judgment, the vast array of Canadians and international personalities whom he knows and who know him and whose respect he has earned, his oratorical skills in both official languages, his spontaneity in question period, his easy interaction with the media, the deep respect he shows for Parliament and the institutions of our democracy, the consistent principles that guide his conduct when the cameras are rolling and equally when they are not, his kindness and decency; these are characteristics that have shaped his leadership.

Far beyond the House, people struggling with issues such as mental illness, for example, people who have been marginalized by life's circumstances, aboriginal peoples searching for new hope and respect, and many others, have seen in this Liberal leader a reason to believe in the potential and compassion that Canada can offer. Perhaps more than any others, the member for Toronto Centre lives by what Laurier would describe as “sunny ways”, that positive instinct to see the glass always half full, not half empty.

Tributes

Yes, tough times come along in politics. One reaction is to get angry, to grow bitter, and if one does that, one will diminish and fade. The best lesson from the member for Toronto Centre is to always rise above the petty, look for the best in people, even one's opponents, be fair and always try to build a more inclusive society and a better country.

[*Translation*]

It was with that attitude that he motivated our caucus and our party, kept us united and helped us to grow, while keeping us visible and relevant.

[*English*]

Perhaps his greatest ally in all this work is his spouse and partner, Arlene. A soul mate, helper, adviser, comforter, confidant and pillar of strength, she and their daughters, Lisa, Judith and Eleanor, have been absolutely indispensable to what has been achieved. Today we say "thank you" to all of them.

We have a future to fight for and hope for another day because of the member for Toronto Centre, and we are grateful.

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to offer remarks on behalf of the Prime Minister and my colleagues in the government caucus to pay tribute to the member for Toronto Centre as he steps down as leader of the Liberal Party.

The member for Toronto Centre will not know this, but about 20 years ago, I was thinking about running for the Ontario legislature. There were two people who especially motivated me. One was Mike Harris and the other was the member opposite. Now I affectionately refer to him as my former premier and I can also say, certainly one of the more fiscally responsible premiers in my lifetime in my province.

His obvious intellect, capacity to think on his feet and speak extemporaneously raised the level of debate in this place. The central role he has played in debate each and every day in this place will be greatly missed. While I often do not agree with the member opposite, we call those days weekdays, I have come to respect him, to seek his counsel and to learn from his perspective. Therefore, it is a real honour for me to join in paying tribute to the member for Toronto Centre.

A fierce partisan, a skilled debater, he is one of those rare members of the House who not only commands respect of both colleagues and opponents, but also of past generations of parliamentarians, as well as those now sitting.

With a long political career, dating back to 1978, the hon. member has served with such elder statesmen as John Diefenbaker, Allan J. MacEachen and Stanley Knowles. He served with them and no doubt sparred with them, for as a parliamentarian, he was an ever-armed opponent.

I must say that in part I blame that old lion of the Prairies, the Right Hon. John George Diefenbaker. The member for Toronto Centre served with Diefenbaker and he will no doubt recall this conversation. Shortly after his first election to the House, Mr. Diefenbaker, already impressed, asked to see him.

"You're making quite a name for yourself", he said. "Let me give you some advice".

If hon. members can believe this 35 years later, the member, who was then known as the member for Broadview, replied, "I need all the help I can get, sir".

Dief gave him some advice. He said, "Some people will tell you to take your time, to sit back and wait your turn. My advice is don't take any nonsense from anybody".

Unfortunately, he followed Dief's advice and it was the old Progressive Conservative Party and the other parties that faced the music.

However, provincial politics called. These were the days of hard campaigning. From October 1978 to November 1982, the hon. member fought four elections. In the course of his long career he would fight seven more. In Ontario, he took a party with a deeply ingrained opposition mentality and brought it to power. Many people were surprised at his evolution from protest to power and, by his own account, not least the member opposite.

When his party was unable to grasp the difference between protest and power he wisely shifted to the right, not far enough, however, but he did shift to the right. There are at least two or three members opposite who I wish he had brought to the right with him. Indeed, there are not many politicians who could start a speech like he did one night last fall. He started his speech, "My fellow red Tories, my fellow New Democrats, my fellow Liberals".

In a more serious vein, today allows us the opportunity to pay tribute to the hon. member's entire family. As he has often joked, he was born in a log embassy. However, what is no joke is the service to Canada performed by the hon. member's late and distinguished father, Saul.

Saul Rae was part of Canada's delegation to the Quebec conference back in 1943. In the pictures of Mackenzie King, Sir Winston Churchill and Franklin Roosevelt, taken in Quebec, we can see him there. The times have shown that the same spirit of public service that made Saul Rae a valuable confidant of great men has passed in abundance to his children. It is a spirit that we all may celebrate today, regardless of party or faction.

● (1520)

In paying tribute to the member opposite, I would be remiss if I did not single out someone who deserves at least as much credit, if not more credit than he does. I am of course referring to his wife Arlene. We can see that he is always in a better mood when she is around. That is why we see her in the halls of this place so often. The member opposite is truly blessed to have someone who has been so supportive of all his time in public service. It is fitting to recognize that the burden of public service is not borne only by those who hold office, so we pay tribute to his wife and to his three daughters, Judith, Lisa and Eleanor.

I have been privileged in my dealings with the member for Toronto Centre. While the hon. member and I have had our differences of opinion in the House, as one would expect, I have found him at the same time to be forthright and insightful on the occasions when I have sought his private views.

Tributes

Upon this last matter, I am utterly convinced. One could argue with the hon. member for Toronto Centre, one could disagree with him, but one could, however, never question his love for Canada, for it is deep, profound and true.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would first echo the comments from my colleagues, both the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the member for Wascana. They were eloquent and caring in their tribute to my friend from Toronto Centre.

I will quite intentionally keep my comments quite short for two very important reasons. On behalf of the official opposition, I heard instructions earlier today when we were preparing this tribute that each of the speakers would adopt the general approach of about two minutes. I suppose my friend from Toronto has inspired us all to say more by demonstration of his own exercise in question period today.

I will try to restrict myself for the second important reason. I know the Liberal caucus has a dinner planned for this evening and if we extend too far in our comments today, it will cut into that dinner. There is a rumour that the member for Beauséjour is actually paying for the dinner and I know my friend from Toronto will want to take every opportunity and every minute he can of the unique and unusual generosity from the member.

● (1525)

[*Translation*]

He is not retiring today. He is simply stepping down as leader of the Liberal Party. I will keep my memories for another day, when he truly retires, which I hope will be in the distant future.

[*English*]

It is fitting to talk about the member's ability to be both sharp and pointed in his attacks and criticisms of the government of the day, as he is open and gracious in his own self-deprecation and self-awareness. I recall a debate he and I had the pleasure of sharing in at the National Arts Centre not too long ago, where he commented to the very large, gracious and happy crowd that he always wanted to be the leader of the Liberal Party in the worst way and he finally had that opportunity. He was able to show his grace and determination in sometimes difficult circumstances, using his ability and his obvious skills as an orator and a parliamentarian in the true sense of the word.

I would personally like to extend my appreciation to him, through you, Mr. Speaker, for his consistent and determined effort to raise the issue of the plight of missing and murdered aboriginal women. I know this is an issue and a cause that affects all Canadians. As someone who comes from the northern parts of the country, to hear a member from the urban capital of Canada talking about it with such passion and such grace has been important and moving for me.

Mr. Speaker, to Arlene and to the family, there have been sacrifices made on their behalf as well over the past number of months. They will get a little more of him back and I am sure that is a great and celebratory thing. It is not often noted enough in this place that we are often here only by the strength and efforts of our families and our friends, who make us available to live the life of public service. I want to thank Arlene for what she has offered.

We too have differed from time to time on various issues. I will not highlight any of those, only to say that we have shared a common cause and a common purpose in our respect for this place, our further commitment to the country and our love of its people.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join my colleagues in paying tribute to the leader of the Liberal Party, who is stepping down.

One of the hon. member for Toronto Centre's best qualities is his great eloquence. He has not been quite eloquent enough to convert a sovereigntist like me into a federalist like him, but this perfect gentleman who sits in this House is actually a great orator with a wonderful sense of humour.

His knowledge of the issues and his ability to speak about them make him a formidable opponent. With his great respect for the British parliamentary system and his political opponents, he has always behaved in a dignified manner and been appreciated by everyone.

He put his personal interests aside to serve those of his party and, in so doing, was able to deal with the many challenges that come with acting as the interim leader. As the quiet strength behind his party, he was able to keep the ship afloat and his troops united during this long transition period.

The hon. member for Toronto Centre dealt with the media on a daily basis, but we all know that he is in his element when facing the media.

When we return to the House after the Easter break, he will step aside for a new leader.

Today is therefore a good time to commend him for the outstanding job he has done in the House and to say that we hope to see him continue the good work he does for his constituents.

Well done, Bob. Thank you for the great work you do every day to support our democracy. Thank you to the hon. member's family as well for the help and support they have given him throughout his career.

● (1530)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am very honoured to join my colleagues in paying tribute to my colleague and friend, the member for Toronto Centre.

[*English*]

It is a great honour for me to serve in the House with the member for Toronto Centre in his time as leader of the Liberal Party. The only thing that distinguishes his term from that of others is he has escaped attack ads.

Tributes

I took my seat here in June 2011, and I was very happy to find seat 309. There were only 308 members in the House. Seat 309 has its special characteristics. I knew it had recently been vacated by my friend from Sackville—Eastern Shore. However, my friend from Toronto Centre said to me, “See that seat where you are now, that is where I started in 1978, 33 years ago”. He gave me great advice. He said, “You play your cards right and 33 years from now, you can be where I am today”. I pictured myself at 90 as the leader of the third party.

Our friend from Toronto Centre has changed parties over the years. I once had great hopes he would become a Green. At the point that he was arrested for blockading the logging roads in Temagami, I thought, “There stands a Green”. Then he had to go and blow it today with that whole Keystone XL joint sales job. The point is that no matter where we disagree, as other members around the House have said, we can disagree without being disagreeable.

It is simply not possible to end this tribute without mentioning Arlene Perly Rae, whom I love like a sister. The member for Toronto Centre I love like something else, but I do love him, as I do many people in the House. His role, his contribution to Canada cannot be overstated; it can only be underestimated. We all pay tribute to a great Canadian today.

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am not at a loss for words, but I do want to thank members. I will not take long. I was very happy to hear the comments by my colleagues.

My first reaction was, what took them all so long? However, my second reaction was to express thanks that I know cannot be expressed by my wife and family for the very kind comments my colleagues have said about them.

I cannot readily find the words to express the extent to which this life of politics I have led for many years has only been possible because of the love, support and partnership that Arlene and I have had. Also, to have had it added to by three wonderful children, my mother, who I know is watching on television, my sister and brother has been very special and meaningful to me. It is not always possible to find the words to express the thanks and gratitude for that love, affection and support.

I was also very pleased that my daughters were able to be here to hear some of what was said, because I do not think they realize what a great guy I really am.

An hon. member: It's clear now.

Hon. Bob Rae: It is clear now. I appreciate that. I think they all know that now.

An hon. member: You get a transcript?

Hon. Bob Rae: The transcript is going to be put in gold.

• (1535)

[*Translation*]

I thank all of the members who spoke today. I want to say to the member who just spoke, the leader of the Bloc Québécois, that I very much appreciated his comments. We do not agree on the fundamental question of the existence of the country—of Canada—but throughout my political career I have always tried to show that

despite our differences of opinion and our profound philosophical differences, we must respect each other. We must find a way to show some dignity here, even though we do not always agree and we do not share the same views.

[*English*]

For the members, from time to time I have offended people. When one says as many things as I do, some of them will seem to be inappropriate and sometimes even hurtful. For that I apologize and express, perhaps on this occasion, the fact that we do not always reach the heights to which we like to ascribe ourselves.

I thank the Prime Minister for his words in question period today, which I appreciated.

I thank the minister for his very kind words. Knowing something of his own political past in Ontario, I know how difficult this transition is to being a generous, kind and thoughtful person.

Hon. Ralph Goodale: He's not there yet.

Hon. Bob Rae: He is getting there. I know how difficult it has been for him. All I can say is on this side we are all rooting for him as he goes through this change.

For my colleague in the New Democratic Party, I fully understand that for many New Democrats my even being here is something of a difficulty for them. It is sort of like living next door to one's first husband for one's whole life. However, I appreciate very much the thoughts that were expressed by my colleague from Skeena and his ability to say kind words. I hope some of them are true, but I really do appreciate what has been said.

I think all of us will understand that one develops a very special relationship with the people who are here and I want to express my deep thanks to all my colleagues.

I especially want to express my thanks to the member for Wascana. We have been together in difficult battles. He has been my deputy leader. One can imagine how challenging that can be sometimes in terms of the stuff we have to try to do. I really do appreciate the kind and thoughtful way in which he has helped me to lead and helped me to provide a sense of direction for our party and our caucus. I am very appreciative of his words today, and I am very appreciative of his friendship and of his colleagueship.

As has been said, I feel a bit like Tom Sawyer, who as we all will recall had an opportunity to attend his own funeral and in so doing was astonished at the things that were being said about him and the emotions that were being shown. To all those who feel like they have gone through some kind of deathbed conversion in saying such things about me, I simply want to say that I am not dead yet. I am still around. I am going to be here on April 15. I am going to be back sitting somewhere in this place, although I am not quite sure where. I will be here to continue my work as a member of Parliament.

Routine Proceedings

It continues to be a great honour to serve the people of Toronto Centre, and it continues to be a great honour to serve in this Parliament. It is true, I have been a rising star now in five separate decades, and the star is still rising. I can feel it. I want to express my deep thanks to members of the House for taking such valuable time out of the Conservative Party's political agenda to express their thanks to me and to the work that I do.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

* * *

• (1540)

ROYAL ASSENT

The Speaker: Order, please. I have the honour to inform the House that a communication has been received as follows:

Government House
Ottawa

March 27th, 2013

Mr. Speaker:

I have the honour to inform you that the Honourable Marshall Rothstein, Puisne Judge of the Supreme Court of Canada, in his capacity as Deputy of the Governor General, will proceed to the Senate Chamber today, the 27th day of March, 2013 at 4 p.m., for the purpose of giving royal assent to certain bills.

Yours sincerely,

Stephen Wallace
Secretary to the Governor General

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

41ST GENERAL ELECTION

The Speaker: I have the honour to lay upon the table a report of the Chief Electoral Officer entitled "Preventing Deceptive Communications With Electors - Recommendations from the Chief Electoral Officer of Canada Following the 41st General Election".

[*Translation*]

This report is deemed permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

* * *

[*English*]

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 36(8) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's responses to five petitions.

* * *

[*Translation*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the

4th report of the Standing Committee on Official Languages, entitled "Linguistic Duality During the 150th Anniversary Celebrations of Canadian Confederation in 2017".

• (1545)

[*English*]

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

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I also have the honour to give a supplementary opinion on behalf of the New Democratic Party of Canada.

I invite Canadians to read the report on the 150th anniversary of Canadian Confederation in 2017. We are completely opposed to the government using the next Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality in its recommendation to encourage the departments and groups involved to refocus their projects and planning on preparations for the celebrations. We believe that this is detrimental to the development of minority language communities across the country. The purpose of the roadmap is to provide communities with the opportunity to develop their schools in some way.

As for funding for the celebrations of the 150th anniversary of Canadian Confederation, it is the responsibility of the Government of Canada to provide the moneys required, and it should not use moneys for the roadmap for that purpose.

Therefore I invite Canadians to read our report.

FINANCE

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton—Leduc, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 16th report of the Standing Committee on Finance, in relation to Bill C-48, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act, the Excise Tax Act, the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act, the First Nations Goods and Services Tax Act and related legislation.

[*English*]

The committee has studied the bill and has decided to report the bill back to the House without amendments.

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Hon. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the eighth report of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage in relation to its study on the status of amateur coaching in Canada.

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

As well, Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the ninth report of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage in relation to the main estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2014.

*Routine Proceedings***CORRUPTION OF FOREIGN PUBLIC OFFICIALS ACT**

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC) moved that Bill S-14, an act to amend the Corruption of Foreign Public Officials Act, be read the first time.

(Motion agreed to and bill read the first time)

* * *

PETITIONS

SEX SELECTION

Mr. Russ Hiebert (South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I stand today to present petitions from hundreds of constituents who are calling upon Parliament to condemn the worst form of discrimination against females and who are asking members of Parliament to support Motion No. 408.

SHARK FINNING

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present petitions in support of Bill C-380, a bill which would stop the import of shark fins into Canada once and for all. This was introduced by my colleague, the NDP deputy Fisheries and Oceans critic.

I would also like to acknowledge the hard work of Fin Free Victoria, a group that includes students from Glenlyon Northfolk School in my riding, which has gathered thousands of signatures.

The bill will come to a vote in the House of Commons this evening and I encourage all members of this House to vote in support of the bill.

CANADA LABOUR CODE

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am also pleased to present petitions to this House in support of the bill introduced by my colleague from Verchères—Les Patriotes. Bill C-464, an act to amend the Canada Labour Code and the Employment Insurance Act, would grant extended parental leave for multiple births or adoptions as a way of levelling the playing field for parents with multiple children.

The Speaker: The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Mr. Speaker, this is for the benefit of my colleague opposite who is relatively new to this place and probably does not understand or does not know the rules and procedures. As we know, members are certainly allowed to present petitions, but they are not allowed to endorse or support publicly the petitions that they are presenting. I would mention that for the future.

EXPERIMENTAL LAKES AREA

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour today to present four petitions, including hundreds of signatures from people all across the city of Regina and in the vicinity who are concerned about the budget reductions that would eliminate the experimental lakes project in northwestern Ontario.

The petitioners indicate that this has been an absolutely crucial site for the most vital freshwater research in North America, perhaps in the world. They think the cancellation and closure of this facility would be a retrograde step. The petitioners call upon the government

to provide the funding necessary to ensure the experimental lakes projects can continue.

• (1550)

SEX SELECTION

Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present the fourth petition on behalf of my constituents, that the House condemn discrimination against females through sex selection pregnancy termination. They ask all members of Parliament to support Motion No. 408 and condemn sex selection.

BANK REMITTANCE FEES

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table petitions from Canadians concerned about the overcharging of remissions of money from Canada. This is of great concern to people who are sending money overseas in support of their families who are in distress, sometimes paying as much as 25% of the remittance.

The petitioners are calling upon the government to follow forth with the undertakings to the G8 and to reduce these remission fees to only 5% when remitting through banks.

SEX SELECTION

Mr. Stephen Woodworth (Kitchener Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have three petitions to present today, which total 150 people from mainly the Kitchener—Waterloo area and about 16 people from British Columbia.

The petitioners ask that the House condemn discrimination against females occurring through sex-selective pregnancy termination. They point out that 92% of Canadians believe that such a thing should be illegal. Millions of girls have been lost through this sex-selective procedure, creating a global gender imbalance. Also, I noticed when I went through the petitions that about 60% of the petitioners are women.

BLOOD DONATION

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is a lifetime ban on blood donation from men who have sex with men. The petitioners are asking the government to reconsider that lifetime ban through Canadian Blood Services. They are asking the government to eliminate policy based on homophobia and outdated practices and to create equal deferral periods for high-risk sexual activity regardless of sexual orientation.

I am pleased to present this petition, and both the petitioners and I look forward to the minister's response.

Routine Proceedings

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present to the House of Commons a petition that opposes the provisions contained in the Act to implement certain provisions of the budget that deal with the power to define “suitable employment” and “reasonable and customary efforts to obtain employment”, as well as the creation of the social security tribunal, because these provisions will impoverish entire economic sectors of our country and will not improve access to employment insurance or the matching of workers' skills with job vacancies.

[English]

LYME DISEASE

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

The first petition is from residents of Caledon, Erin and Brampton, Ontario, who are in support of my private member's Bill C-442, an act respecting a national Lyme disease strategy.

SHARK FINNING

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is pertinent to a vote we will have this evening on Bill C-380 to ban the importation of shark fins. Upon discussing the matter with the hon. member for Oakville, he pointed out that there are now approximately 100 million sharks a year that are killed for this practice of finning.

The petitioners in this case are from my own riding, from the islands of Pender, Galiano and Salt Spring.

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am tabling a petition that opposes certain provisions of the 2012 budget that deal with employment insurance, including the definitions of “suitable employment” and “reasonable efforts”, as well as the creation of the social security tribunal.

[English]

BANK REMITTANCE FEES

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition today from dozens of residents of the Ottawa area. These Canadians are very concerned about the excessive fees and gouging that is taking place when they are transferring money abroad. Many new Canadians live on low incomes, and they are being gouged up to 25% of the amount they are sending to loved ones and family members who live overseas. On their behalf, I would like to table this petition.

They say it falls upon the government to bring in legislation that would limit the fees on remittances to 5% of funds, instead of the 25% and sometimes more that currently exists.

I would like to thank the good volunteers of ACORN Canada who have been raising this issue for low-income Canadians.

● (1555)

ROAD SAFETY

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, spring has arrived and there are a lot more cyclists, and I am pleased to present a petition on their behalf.

The petitioners ask the Government of Canada to introduce a regulation under the Motor Vehicle Safety Act that would make side guards for trucks mandatory in order to prevent cyclists, motorcyclists and pedestrians from being pulled under the wheels of these vehicles. It would be good for the environment, as it reduces fuel usage, and also good for safety.

PARKS CANADA

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my second petition is from people in the Ottawa area.

The petitioners point out that the Rideau Canada is a UNESCO world heritage site and a historical site. It represents a significant part of our Canadian heritage. They ask that Parks Canada return the hours of operation of this waterway to the 2011 service level.

SEX SELECTION

Mr. Jeff Watson (Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise and present a petition on behalf of dozens of Canadian citizens from southwestern Ontario and Manitoba who in particular note that millions of girls have been lost through sex-selective abortion, creating a global gender imbalance and causing girls to be trafficked into prostitution. The petitioners say that Parliament needs to condemn this worst form of discrimination against females, and they call on members of Parliament to support Motion No. 408 to condemn sex selection.

* * *

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURN

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if Questions Nos. 1166 and 1169 could be made orders for return, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 1166—**Hon. Scott Brison:**

With regard to the internal services program activity listed in the Public Accounts of Canada Volume II: (a) what was the total net expenditure on internal services for the government for each year of 2009-2010, 2010-2011, and 2011-2012; (b) what was the total gross expenditure on internal services for the government for each year of 2009-2010, 2010-2011, and 2011-2012; (c) what was the breakdown of net expenditures on internal services for each federal department and agency for each year of 2009-2010, 2010-2011, and 2011-2012; and (d) what was the breakdown of gross expenditures on internal services for each federal department and agency for each year of 2009-2010, 2010-2011, and 2011-2012?

(Return tabled)

S. O. 52

Question No. 1169—**Hon. Irwin Cotler:**

With regard to C-54, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the National Defence Act (mental disorder): (a) in developing this legislation, on what (i) studies, (ii) case law, (iii) doctrinal sources did the government rely; (b) what statistics does the government track with respect to people found not criminally responsible (NCR) on account of mental disorder; (c) for each of the last ten years, broken down by province and territory and by type of offence, (i) how many people have been found NCR, (ii) which people found NCR have been released without conditions, (iii) which people found NCR have been released with conditions, (iv) how long has each person found NCR spent in treatment prior to release, (v) which people found NCR and released have been convicted of a subsequent offence, (vi) what was the nature of the subsequent offence, (vii) which people found NCR and released have been found NCR of a subsequent offence, (viii) what was the nature of the subsequent offence; (d) for each of the last ten years, what was the recidivism rate for all federal offenders; (e) broken down by province and territory, (i) which treatment facilities accept people found NCR, (ii) which of these facilities are privately owned, (iii) what is the capacity of each facility, (iv) how many people are currently housed in each facility; (f) what analysis has the government performed to determine whether this legislation will result in a need for increased capacity in these facilities; (g) what are the conclusions of this analysis; (h) what steps is the government taking to ensure adequate capacity in these facilities; (i) what funds are currently designated for (i) the construction of new facilities to house people found NCR, (ii) the expansion of existing such facilities; (j) what government programs exist to fund any such facilities that are privately owned; (k) what funds have been allocated to any such programs for each of the past ten years; (l) what steps is the government taking to mitigate Charter litigation with respect to people found NCR who may be unable to secure space in an appropriate facility; (m) has Bill C-54 been examined by the Department of Justice to ascertain consistency with the Charter; (n) which officials performed the examination, (i) when was the examination initiated, (ii) when was the examination completed, (iii) what were the conclusions of this examination; (o) when was the Minister of Justice presented with these conclusions; (p) was a report of inconsistency prepared; (q) was a report of inconsistency presented to Parliament; and (r) has there been an assessment of the litigation risk relative to the enactment of this legislation and, if so, what are the conclusions of this assessment?

(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.

* * *

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE

SEARCH AND RESCUE

The Speaker: The Chair has notice of a request for an emergency debate from the hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I wrote to you today to ask permission pursuant to Standing Order 52 (2) to hold an emergency debate on the closure of the Quebec City

marine rescue sub-centre by the Canadian Coast Guard, a special operating agency of Fisheries and Oceans Canada.

As of April 15, less than 19 days from now, the St. Lawrence River estuary and the northern part of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, which are currently served by the Quebec City marine rescue sub-centre, will become the responsibility of the Joint Rescue Coordination Centre Halifax.

The reason for the emergency debate is this. The government announced the transfer last Friday at 5 p.m. From what we heard, the transfer was to take place in the fall. The Commissioner of Official Languages investigated and, sometime around April 22, he was to verify whether the recommendations he made to the government had been implemented. All of a sudden, we learn that the transfer will take place on April 15.

The House of Commons will adjourn tomorrow until April 15. That is why an emergency debate must be held immediately. It is not just a question of official languages or someone whose rights have been violated. We are talking about the rescue sub-centre put in place for fishers, for people travelling on the St. Lawrence River. That is something else.

The rescue sub-centre was created 32 years ago for safety reasons and because of the language spoken in the region. This is important because lives are at stake. That is why a press conference was held today, attended by the media, people from Quebec and francophones from across Canada. The only bilingual rescue sub-centre in Canada is being closed down.

We do not want to leave any stone unturned, so that we do not have to come back one day and say, “We told you so.” That would be a disaster.

I believe it is your responsibility, Mr. Speaker, to grant this emergency debate. You have the power, pursuant to Standing Order 52(2). This request complies with the law and with our Standing Orders.

Mr. Speaker, I do not think you want to be the one who refused such an important debate. People's lives are at stake here. That is what the experts are saying. We personally consulted people in Quebec City. We met with experts, and they all told us that this is a ticking time bomb and a serious threat.

I trust that you will make the smart decision to grant this emergency debate so that we leave no stone unturned. If the government decides to close the sub-centre, it will bear the responsibility. It will not be on us or on you.

● (1600)

The Speaker: I would like to thank the member for Acadie—Bathurst for raising this question.

I have no doubt that this is a very important issue to the hon. member. However, I should point out that we have already had four days of debate on the budget, so we have had the opportunity to talk about many things that are the government's responsibility. Today, we are still debating the government's budget policy in general. I believe that the members will have the opportunity to speak to this issue today, as they have had the opportunity to do over the past few days.

Speaker's Ruling

For those reasons, I do not believe it is necessary to agree to the member's request.

* * *

[English]

PRIVILEGE

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now prepared to rule on the question of privilege raised on March 6, 2013 by the member for Winnipeg Centre regarding the Minister of Justice's statutory obligation to examine government bills and regulations to determine whether they are inconsistent with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Canadian Bill of Rights.

I would like to thank the hon. member for Winnipeg Centre for having raised this matter, as well as the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, the hon. Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, the hon. House Leader of the Official Opposition and the members for Saanich—Gulf Islands, Winnipeg Centre, Mount Royal and Gatineau for their comments.

[Translation]

In raising this question of privilege, the member for Winnipeg Centre explained that, pursuant to certain statutory requirements, the Minister of Justice is required to examine all government bills and regulations in order to determine whether they are actually inconsistent with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Bill of Rights. He cited section 3 of the Canadian Bill of Rights, which states:

...the Minister of Justice shall...examine every regulation...and every Bill introduced in or presented to the House of Commons by a Minister of the Crown, in order to ascertain whether any of the provisions thereof are inconsistent with the purposes and provisions of this Part and he shall report any such inconsistency to the House of Commons.

[English]

The hon. member then claimed that if the allegations contained in an action filed in the Federal Court by Mr. Edgar Schmidt, a Department of Justice official, are proven to be true, the minister has flouted these statutory requirements. He contends that the minister manages the risk of inconsistency in a cavalier fashion, and he argues that by allowing legislation to be introduced in the House that has a possibility of being inconsistent with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms or the Bill of Rights, the minister misleads Parliament, thus leaving members with no reliable assurance that proposed legislation is not in violation of the charter and the Bill of Rights.

The member asked that the Chair find that the minister's approach had thus effectively impeded members in performing their duty to exercise due diligence in considering government bills. I note that to do so, the Chair would first need to establish whether the Minister of Justice had acted in accordance with his statutory obligations.

• (1605)

[Translation]

That said, while the member for Winnipeg Centre went on to admit that there exists no evidence that the Minister of Justice deliberately, or even implicitly, gave the House inaccurate information, he claimed that there are serious deficiencies in the examination

and vetting of draft government legislation by the Minister of Justice as evidenced by a number of legal challenges to legislation believed to be inconsistent with the charter and the Bill of Rights.

[English]

The member contended that even though the matter is before the courts, the *sub judice* convention does not prevent the House from considering this question of privilege, as it is in no way dependent on the findings of the court, nor will the debate on the question of privilege interfere with the court in carrying out its duties. Acknowledging that questions of privilege must be raised at the earliest opportunity, the member for Winnipeg Centre assured the House that he brought this matter to the attention of the House as quickly as he could bring the research together, given the complexity of this question of privilege.

[Translation]

In response, the Minister of Justice insisted that the matter was not raised at the first opportunity since the court action in question was filed on December 14, 2012, leaving the member many opportunities to have raised this matter in the intervening months—as many other members had done in both committees and in the House. Second, the minister argued that the Chair has no jurisdiction over questions of law, which are for the courts alone to decide. Third, the minister suggested that the *sub judice* convention dictates that since the matter is before the courts, the House should allow the courts to resolve the matter before undertaking any debate on the matter.

[English]

The Minister of Justice noted that the member for Winnipeg Centre had failed to provide any evidence that the House and its members were in any way impeded in carrying out their duties. The minister stated categorically that “this government has never introduced any legislation that I believe was inconsistent with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms or the Canadian Bill of Rights”.

He went on to remind the House that the member for Winnipeg Centre had acknowledged that he had “no evidence” to suggest that the minister provided deliberately inaccurate information to the House about government bills.

[Translation]

The Chair has listened attentively to members' interventions on this matter and it seems to me that this question of privilege involves three key points: namely, the timeliness of the question of privilege; the *sub judice* convention; and the Speaker's role in determining matters of law.

[English]

Regarding timeliness, both the member for Winnipeg Centre and the opposition house leader explained that it was only after some time-consuming initial research that the member felt compelled to raise the matter in the form of a question of privilege.

Furthermore, I was interested in the statement of the member for Gatineau, who noted that this question of privilege was raised only after efforts to consider the matter in committee had failed.

While I might come to a different conclusion if the question at issue related directly to a specific incident in the House with regard to this particular question of privilege, I am satisfied with the explanations offered and will not rule this question out of order purely on the basis of timeliness.

The suggestion has also been made that the *sub judice* convention, in and of itself, prevents the consideration of this question of privilege at this time.

House of Commons Procedure and Practice, second edition, at page 627 states:

The interpretation of this convention is left to the Speaker since no "rule" exists to prevent Parliament from discussing a matter which is *sub judice*.

[Translation]

As Speaker, I must endeavour to find a balance between the right of the House to debate a matter and the effect that this debate might have. This is particularly important given that the purpose of the *sub judice* convention is to ensure that judicial decisions can be made free of undue influence. While O'Brien and Bosc states on page 628, in reference to a March 22, 1983, ruling by Speaker Sauvé,

...the *sub judice* convention has never stood in the way of the House considering a *prima facie* matter of privilege vital to the public interest or to the effective operation of the House and its Members.

It also speaks of another aspect of this convention that is too critical to ignore when at page 100 it states:

The *sub judice* convention is important in the conduct of business in the House. It protects the rights of interested parties before the courts, and preserves and maintains the separation and mutual respect between the legislature and the judiciary. The convention ensures that a balance is created between the need for a separate, impartial judiciary and free speech.

[English]

Strictly speaking, in the case before us, while the *sub judice* convention does not prevent debate on the matter, the fact remains that the heart of this question of privilege is still before the courts, which have yet to make a finding. I believe that it would be prudent for the House to use caution in taking steps that could result in an investigatory process that would, in many ways, run parallel to the court proceedings, particularly given that the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada is already a party to the court proceedings and would be a central figure in any consideration the House might give this matter.

Arguments over the timeliness of the intervention of the member for Winnipeg Centre and the extent of the restraints we might choose to impose on ourselves because of the *sub judice* convention are ancillary matters. It seems to me that the central element of this question of privilege asks the Speaker to determine if the government is meeting its obligations under the law, as set out in section 3 of the Canadian Bill of Rights and section 4.1 of the Department of Justice Act and their relevant regulations. The member for Mount Royal distilled this issue down to its fundamental element in stating:

What is rightly before this House, raised as a question of privilege, is whether minister has satisfied himself of the constitutional compliance of legislation.

This is the very matter the member for Winnipeg Centre has placed before me for my consideration in raising this question of privilege.

Speaker's Ruling

[Translation]

Numerous previous Speakers' decisions point to a very clear practice for the Chair to follow in instances such as this. In a ruling given by Speaker Fraser, on April 9, 1991, which can be found at pages 19233 and 19234 of the *House of Commons Debates*, he said:

The Speaker has no role in interpreting matters of either a constitutional or legal nature.

In a ruling given by Speaker Jerome, on June 19, 1978, which can be found at page 6525 of the *House of Commons Debates*, he addressed a complaint that the government of the day may have acted illegally. He stated:

The hon. Member also alleges the Government acted illegally in the manner in which postal rates have been increased. Hon. Members will be aware that I have a duty to decide questions of order, not of law, and furthermore, I understand that this issue is now before the courts. In my opinion, therefore, it is an issue to be settled by the courts, and the Chair should not intervene.

[English]

House of Commons Procedure and Practice, second edition, at page 261, also provides valuable insight. It states:

...while Speakers must take the Constitution and statutes into account when preparing a ruling, numerous Speakers have explained that it is not up to the Speaker to rule on the "constitutionality" or "legality" of measures before the House.

In a ruling on a similar matter, Speaker Milliken, on April 12, 2005, at page 4953 of the *Debates*, did articulate the limited kinds of legal or constitutional matters the Chair could rule on.

He stated at that time:

What they may decide is whether the terms of a bill are in compliance with a prior resolution of this House, a ways and means motion, for example, or a royal recommendation in respect of a money bill, but beyond that, Speakers do not intervene in respect of the constitutionality or otherwise of provisions in the bills introduced in this House.

[Translation]

More recently, I have also been called upon to make rulings which effectively asked me to interpret the law. On October 24, 2011, at page 2405 of the *Debates*, I stated:

...it is important to delineate clearly between interpreting legal provisions of statutes—which is not within the purview of the Chair—and ensuring the soundness of the procedures and practices of the House when considering legislation—which, of course, is the role of the Chair.

[English]

Given the Chair's limited scope to consider legal matters, and based solely on what is within my purview to consider, I cannot comment on the adequacy of the approach taken by the government to fulfill its statutory obligations. I can therefore find no evidence that the member for Winnipeg Centre's privileges have been breached and cannot see how this rises to a matter of contempt. Accordingly, I cannot find a *prima facie* question of privilege.

I thank all members for their attention.

*Privilege***ROYAL ASSENT**

•(1625)

[English]

A message was delivered by the Usher of the Black Rod as follows:

Mr. Speaker, the hon. Deputy of His Excellency the Governor General desires the immediate attendance of this honourable House in the chamber of the honourable the Senate.

Accordingly the Speaker with the House went up to the Senate chamber.

And being returned:

The Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that when the House went up to the Senate chamber the hon. Deputy of His Excellency the Governor General was pleased to give, in Her Majesty's name, the royal assent to the following bills:

Bill C-28, An Act to amend the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada Act—Chapter 1.

Bill C-370, An Act to amend the Canada National Parks Act (St. Lawrence Islands National Park of Canada)—Chapter 2.

Bill C-293, An Act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (vexatious complainants)—Chapter 3.

Bill C-58, An Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the financial year ending March 31, 2013—Chapter 4.

Bill C-59, An Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the financial year ending March 31, 2014—Chapter 5.

Bill C-53, An Act to assent to alterations in the law touching the Succession to the Throne—Chapter 6.

Bill C-27, An Act to enhance the financial accountability and transparency of First Nations—Chapter 7.

Bill C-55, An Act to amend the Criminal Code—Chapter 8.

Pursuant to an order made on Friday, March 22, I wish to inform the House that because of the statements made earlier today, the time for government orders will be extended by 30 minutes.

[Translation]

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 Thunder Bay—Superior North, Regional Economic Development; the hon. member for Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, Firearms Registry; the hon. member for LaSalle—Émard, Aerospace Industry.

* * *

[English]

PRIVILEGE

S. O. 31

Mr. Brent Rathgeber (Edmonton—St. Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is really an honour for me to add a couple of comments in support of the member for Langley, who yesterday alleged that his parliamentary privilege had been breached.

Members will appreciate that this is a unique situation and an important point of privilege, and that it deals with the collective rights of all members of the House. The member for Langley alleges

that his parliamentary privilege was affected in that on March 21, he was denied what was his expected and promised slot to deliver an S. O. 31, also known as a member's statement. The reason he states that his promised slot was removed was that the topic "was not approved".

I am troubled by this turn of events, and I and most members believe that it is larger than what might have been the subject matter of that S. O. 31. I suggest that all members of the House should be troubled by the turn of events last Thursday. S. O. 31 reads as follows:

A Member may be recognized, under the provisions of Standing Order 30(5), to make a statement for not more than one minute. The Speaker may order a Member to resume his or her seat if, in the opinion of the Speaker, improper use is made of this Standing Order.

According to the rule, it is clear that the Speaker, and only the Speaker, can order a member to resume his or her seat if the member's statement is over one minute or is improper for some other reason. Denying an S. O. 31, according to the words of the Standing Order, is the exclusive prerogative of the Speaker. No other member of the House has the authority, delegated or otherwise, to deny a private member the opportunity to make a member's statement.

When members' statements were first introduced in S. O. 31 in 1983, then Speaker Sauvé stated on January 12, 1983, that this period was intended to provide members with an opportunity "to voice serious issues of international, national or local concern". Although the S. O. 31 came into force in 1982, its genesis is in a rule that existed in the House from Confederation until approximately 1940. The practice was that members could seek unanimous consent of the House to move a motion without notice. Unanimous consent was almost always given and was so routinely given that the House had to eventually restrict it to matters of "urgent and pressing necessity".

However, the matters of urgent and pressing necessity prerequisite was so routinely ignored and so many members were rising, that more formal rules were considered and adopted. Therefore in 1982, a special procedure committee concluded that the former practice requiring unanimous consent was used for purposes for which it was never intended. They opted for a new Standing Order that would become Standing Order 31, which would enable members to make statements on current issues on a daily basis during the first 15 minutes of the sitting.

Previous Speakers have been guided by a number of well-defined prohibitions. On January 17, 1983, when introducing statements by members, then Speaker Sauvé stated that members may speak on any matter of concern, and not necessarily on urgent matters only. As well, personal attacks are not permitted and congratulatory messages, recitations of poetry and frivolous matters are all out of order. Marleau and Montpetit state at 363 that these guidelines are still in place today, although Speakers tend to turn a blind eye to the latter restrictions.

The Budget

Therefore, nowhere in the Standing Orders or in the enunciated guidelines do the members' statements need to be vetted by any other member or committee of members. Since 1983, additional restrictions have been placed on members' statements by the previous occupants of your chair. Subsequent Speakers have ordered members to retake their seats when offensive language has been used, when a Senator has been attacked, when the actions of the Senate have been criticized, when a ruling of a court has been criticized and if the character of a judge has been attacked.

It is true that certain practices and customs have evolved to provide some order and predictability to the 15 minutes prior to question period. It is also true that it is written in the commentary:

In according Members the opportunity to participate in this period, the Chair is guided by lists provided by the Whips of the various parties and attempts to recognize those Members supporting the government and those Members in opposition on an equitable basis.

• (1630)

However, the Speaker retains discretion over the acceptability of each statement and has the authority to order a member to resume his or her seat if improper use is being made of these Standing Orders.

I have a couple of observations regarding the Chair being guided by lists provided by the whips of the various parties.

First, it is the Speaker who has the discretion to deem a member's statement unacceptable. Nothing in the rules allows this discretion to be delegated, and there is no suggestion that the Speaker has delegated the authority to any other member of Parliament.

Second, the wording in the usage is "guided by", not "bound by", so I would submit it is permissive, not mandatory. Therefore, while the Speaker may be guided by lists provided by the various whips, the Speaker is in no way bound by these lists.

I can see that these lists are certainly convenient for the Chair in providing an orderly introduction of the 15 members who will be presenting S. O. 31s on any given day, but nothing in the Standing Orders or in practice authorizes the whip to choose the 15 speakers.

Moreover, it is submitted that convenience for the Chair through providing an orderly rotation so that when one member sits, the next one stands can violate neither the letter nor the spirit of the standing order.

For these reasons, I support the member for Langley in his case that his parliamentary privilege has been compromised by having to submit his proposed member's statement for vetting. This is a process that is not contemplated by the standing order and would appear to be completely contrary to the stated purpose of the member's statement, which is to allow members to address the House for up to one minute on virtually any matter of international, national, provincial or local concern.

We do not know if the rejected statement from the member for Langley would have fitted into one of those broad categories. Since he was not allowed to deliver it, we will never know. That is a violation of not only the member's right to deliver a statement but also of the right of this House to hear his statement.

Accordingly, I would ask that under the circumstances you find a prima facie case of breach of privilege with respect to the member for Langley.

In a Parliament where the government and the opposition control such a large portion of the parliamentary calendar and agenda, private members' bills, motions and S. O. 31s are the very few mechanisms that members have to bring forward matters of importance for their constituents.

I would submit that if the House does not jealously protect the rights of members to bring forward matters of concern to their constituents and if it does not strictly enforce those rules, the roles of the private member, Parliament and ultimately democracy have all been equally compromised.

• (1635)

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for his further contribution on the question currently before the Chair.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Prince Albert.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed from March 26 consideration of the motion that this House approve in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is great to be here today. It has been a busy afternoon in the House of Commons, so it is nice to get on with the debate and the country's business.

I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Nanaimo—Alberni.

The people of B.C. are just as excited about this budget as the people of Saskatchewan, because there are so many good things in it for our constituents and Canadians right across Canada.

Canada has been doing very well throughout the global crisis. The World Economic Forum ranked Canada's banking system as the safest in the world. We have a good, solid banking system, so our constituents can take comfort in knowing that their deposits are safe and secure. Another thing to point out is that Canada has a AAA credit rating, the best credit rating in the world. Canada has been doing very well in light of the financial crisis that has been going on around us.

One of the other things we should talk about is job creation. While other countries are losing jobs and suffering massive unemployment, we are creating new jobs here in Canada. We have created 950,000 net new jobs since the start of the 2008 global crisis. That is amazing if we look at what is going on around the world.

The Budget

Saskatchewan is in a unique situation when it comes to jobs. The unemployment rate in Saskatchewan is sitting right at 3.7%. That is basically telling me that anybody who wants a job in Saskatchewan can get a job.

When I go back to my riding and talk to business owners about what they require in order to see more expansion and growth, the common theme is the lack of employees. They are looking for ways to get not just new employees but skilled employees. They need plumbers and electricians. They need people with their journeyman status.

Canada's economic action plan 2013 addresses those needs. The first action our government took was to bring in the Canada job grant. This program would allow a maximum benefit of up to \$5,000. The federal government will put in \$5,000, the business will put in \$5,000 and the provincial government will put in \$5,000 for skills training.

When I talk to people like some of the ag machinery dealerships in my riding, they tell me that they need more heavy-duty mechanics. They can embrace a program like this and take advantage of it. With the free skills training, they can create heavy-duty mechanics out of a common employee. Those are the kinds of things that businesses require, and they are there in economic action plan 2013.

Another thing people in Saskatchewan are looking for is a way to get their journeyman status more quickly. This has been addressed in economic action plan 2013. We need more journeymen mechanics, plumbers and electricians in Saskatchewan. I am looking at remodelling a house, and I have to wait up to four months just to get a plumber. I have to wait up to three months for someone to put in a furnace. The skills shortage in my riding of Prince Albert is extreme, and this action plan will hopefully help to alleviate some of those concerns.

I want to point out some things that are unique to my riding of Prince Albert.

Aboriginal youth come to Prince Alberta from northern ridings looking for work. These are the people we need to get into the skills training program, and we have set up funding to do that. We are going to see more of that going forward. More aboriginal people are going to be participating in the economy. When we talk to chiefs with James Smith Cree Nation and Muskoday First Nation, this is something that they want. They want to participate in the economic boom going on in Saskatchewan, and this plan will allow their band members to do that. This is going to be great for Canada as a whole.

Another thing in the budget is the new building Canada plan. When I talk to my mayors, councillors and reeves, they tell me they want to see some sort of bankable method of payment from the federal government. The community improvement fund is a consistent fund of \$32.2 billion over 10 years. Municipalities will be receiving funds they can bank on. They can use the money for a variety of different projects. They can use it for water or sewer, as may be done up in Nipawin, or they may want to use it for road construction in Kinistino. These are indexed funds that they can count on going into their coffers year after year. They are bankable and predictable, so municipalities can budget around them and plan on them and use them according to their needs.

The nice thing about this fund is that it is fairly wide open with respect to utilization. Municipalities can use it for a variety of projects. As I said, it can be used for a water project or to build a road or pave a street; those options are there. That is the nice thing about this fund.

I was talking to a couple of reeves over the weekend, who were very excited because these funds are bankable and predictable. It is something they asked for, and we actually gave it to them.

● (1640)

Then there is \$14 billion for the new building Canada fund. One thing we have to recognize is that Canada is an exporting nation, but we need to keep building infrastructure. We need to take advantage of the resources we have, but in order to do that, we have to build infrastructure. We have to build roads. We have to put in infrastructure to get to the mines. We have to put in infrastructure to get the product to market. These are things that will be addressed by the \$14 billion fund. Canadians recognize it as an important need and as something that will help our economy grow for a long time into the future.

We have the \$1.25 billion renewal of the P3 Canada fund. The Province of Saskatchewan is embracing that fund. I know other provinces have embraced it. Here is a practical way to get projects built in a way that allows both the private sector and the public sector to participate, and the benefit is for the taxpayer, without a doubt.

Of course we have \$6 billion under the current infrastructure programs for the provinces, territories and municipalities from 2014-15.

When we look at the new building Canada plan, there is over \$53 billion over 10 years for infrastructure. That is a substantial amount of money, and it is probably the longest period of time that any money has been consistently given to the provinces and municipalities for infrastructure needs. It has never been done in the history of Canada for this length of a period of time.

Saskatchewan is an agricultural province that has gone from agriculture to mining. It has lots of resources, but it also has great world-class research. Genome Prairie is a good example, and it is nice to see core funding of \$165 million going to the Genome projects that will be spread across Canada. That is groundbreaking research from which we will see benefits for years and years to come, and I am happy to see it in the budget.

We are also supporting and helping businesses to invest in innovation, thus making them more competitive and creating more high-paying jobs here in Canada.

Those are the items in the budget that will provide long-term growth and prosperity, not just for members sitting here but for our kids and our grandkids.

We cannot forget families. The family structure is such an important structure. We have to look at the variety of ways we can help families.

The Budget

One of the things in the budget that is really great and unique is enhanced tax relief for families that are adopting children or those using home care services. That is important. That is actually something that families and taxpayers can use. They can look at it and say they have a government that appreciates their needs and requirements. It is in the budget, so I cannot see how members would ever vote against something like that.

I am a hockey player, and many of us have hockey kids. If parents can get baby clothes tariff-free and get cheaper, tariff-free hockey equipment, that again is supporting the family structure and is very positive.

We have \$1.9 billion over five years going for homelessness and housing. The \$1.9 billion is a substantial amount going into something that is drastically needed.

I wish I had a lot more time, because I could go on for 10, 15, 20 or 30 minutes, but I am going to speed up on some of the things I also see happening here that are important to highlight.

Last year I did the Nijmegen march. I went to Groesbeek Cemetery in Holland. Not a blade of grass was out of place. Every tombstone was correct. The respect the people from the Netherlands give to our soldiers is amazing. With the increase and doubling of the funeral service reimbursement, we can do that here in Canada for our veterans also. That is very important. Taking it from \$3,600 to \$7,300 is something that our vets deserve, and it is nice to see it in the budget.

In closing, I would highlight something that is very important to me because I come from Saskatchewan. It is the fact that we are going to get to a balanced budget. What other country in the world is going to talk about getting to a balanced budget after going through a global recession since 2008? In 2015-16, we are going to have a balanced budget.

In Saskatchewan we have had a balanced budget. The premier has done a great job in making sure spending is kept under control—

•(1645)

Hon. John Baird: He's a good premier.

Mr. Randy Hoback: I thank the Minister of Foreign Affairs. He actually is a good premier, because he has balanced his books and has put a priority on where the money should be spent. If we look at the growth in the province of Saskatchewan, we see it is a province that is growing fast. Again I will repeat that the unemployment rate is 3.5%. If we could do that here federally, we can just think of what we could do and what the response would be across the country.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great attention to the member's speech. The member spoke of the government's increase in the gas tax and indexing, as requested for quite some time by the NDP. We appreciate that Conservatives finally listened to that, as requested by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities.

However, he also spoke about the priority being to build infrastructure for Canadian exports. I wonder if the member could speak to the years of waiting by more than 100 aboriginal communities for access to safe drinking water. Given the dollars allocated in the budget, could the member speak to how many more

years many of those 100 first nations will still have to wait for safe drinking water for their families?

Mr. Randy Hoback: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her speech. It is unfortunate that she would not vote for what was in the budget to actually provide the GST tax dollars to the municipalities. If I look at the NDP record, when it came to putting this in place, the members actually voted against it.

When it comes to aboriginal communities and safe drinking water, I think we all agree that it needs to be improved upon. Unfortunately, I cannot control what was done before me. I cannot control what the Liberal government did. However, we are making strides to make it better. We are working with the aboriginal communities. We are making it better and stronger. We recognize that there are needs for improvements, and we are taking steps to address those needs.

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I notice that my hon. colleague talked about the importance of infrastructure, and I agree with him. In fact, it was Paul Martin who started to take money from the excise tax on gasoline to devote to infrastructure, which was a good thing.

Why is it that we are going to have to wait a couple of more years? If infrastructure is so pressing, why is the amount of money put toward it so light for the next couple of years? This reminds me of when the Conservative government, in 2011, during the last election, promised that it was going to double the tax-free savings allowance from \$5,000 to \$10,000 once the budget was balanced, some time in the future. Conservatives did the same thing with income splitting in families for income tax purposes. Once again, that was going to be done after the budget was balanced.

If everything is so urgent, why is it that on infrastructure, the amount of money for the next two years is so little?

•(1650)

Mr. Randy Hoback: Mr. Speaker, let us review what we are doing in the new building Canada plan.

We have \$32.2 billion over 10 years for the community improvement fund. It consists of an indexed gas tax fund and incremental GST rebates for municipalities to build roads, public transit, recreational facilities and other community infrastructure. We have \$14 billion in the new building Canada fund. We have \$1.25 billion in the renewal of the P3 Canada project fund. There is \$6 billion under current infrastructure programs for provinces, territories and municipalities in 2014-15. That is a substantial amount of money going toward building infrastructure. It is amazing, because this was not done in a lot of previous governments.

Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I always enjoy hearing the revisionist history provided by the NDP and the Liberal Party, which voted against the largest investment in infrastructure in the history of this country with the stimulus program we brought in a number of years ago.

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In Huron—Bruce we have had great success with infrastructure investments. The municipalities in my riding are now planning for the future. They are talking to architects and members of the community to come up with new ideas on what their priorities are, so I think this is well timed.

I would ask the member for Prince Albert how the Canada job grant program is going to work for him, his community and his riding. I think that is a program that will help keep their economy in high gear.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his excellent question, because it is very true.

All members of the Conservative government did pre-budget consultations. When I did, I talked with the business community. One thing they wanted and required was more skilled workers. They asked for assistance in getting an unskilled worker to become a skilled worker. This program is one way to do that. It would provide financial assistance for both the employee and the employer to get the worker to that next level to get a higher-paid skilled job that will take him or her through to retirement.

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a real pleasure to enter the debate on budget 2013, our economic action plan.

Before I begin, I would like to congratulate the member for Prince Albert for his excellent speech. Also, since a few moments ago members paid tribute to the outgoing leader of the Liberal Party, I would like to acknowledge the member for Toronto Centre for his tremendous contributions in the House and for his affable ways. He is a great retail politician. I think we all give him credit for that.

Speaking to this issue, I want to back up and provide some background. Budget 2013, of course, builds on the measures in the previous two budgets. We have to reflect on what happened in 2008, when we were hammered by an economic tsunami: a global economic crisis, *une crise mondiale*, as some would call it, beginning with the subprime mortgage meltdown and the economic collapse in the United States. The government was compelled to come up with a strategy to respond quickly to provide unprecedented economic stimulus and support for displaced workers and unemployed and underemployed Canadians and to stabilize our economic institutions. The plan worked. This economic action plan is following up on those measures. They were the right measures for the right time in a troubled period.

Since the peak of the recession, in July 2009, these measures have created more than 950,000 net new jobs, and 90% of those are private sector jobs. Canada was late, shall I say, later than our economic partners, going into the recession, and we were the first, as predicted, to come out of the recession.

Let me remind members that before the economic tsunami hit us in 2008, our Conservative government had paid down some \$39 billion on our national debt. That was important. It was a wise and responsible decision. It prepositioned us to absorb the body slam, if I can mix my metaphors, of an economic tsunami, but it prepositioned us to take that better than many nations did. The outcome of our economic action plan has put Canada in the enviable position of doing much better than most developed western economies.

The evidence is that Canada's economy has expanded for six consecutive quarters. Canada's unemployment rate is well below that of the United States, the strongest showing in more than three decades. The World Economic Forum has ranked Canada's banking and monetary system the most stable in the world for the fifth consecutive year. Canada's debt-to-GDP ratio is the lowest in the G7 nations by far, at about, if I have the correct figures, 35.8%. The next closest would be Germany, at 58.4%. The average in the G7 is 80.4%. Our net debt-to-GDP ratio is the lowest of the G7, by far, and is the envy of most other nations. Finally, all the major rating agencies—Fitch, Moody's, Standard and Poor's—confirm our solid AAA financial rating.

In budget 2013, our commitment is to continue to pursue jobs, employment and economic prosperity. On the job front, the Canada job grant is up to \$15,000 per person. It is \$5,000 federally, matched with provincial and territorial partners and with the employer. That is to match the unemployed and the underemployed with high-demand jobs in our country. It is striking that in the past year, some 250,000 job opportunities were not filled because of a lack of skilled labour in the right place at the right time. That is a real drag on our economy. It is a missed opportunity for unemployed and underemployed people, because they lack the skills training. This budget has very targeted initiatives to create opportunities for Canadians to get the skills they need to engage in high-demand jobs. This program is expected to benefit some 130,000 Canadians.

• (1655)

The budget is focused squarely on creating jobs, growth and economic prosperity. In broad terms, the EAP 2013 would have numerous programs to create jobs. It would renew the building Canada fund and would lay out the largest infrastructure funding program in Canadian history, at about \$53 billion over 10 years. It would provide measures to promote our competitiveness, science and technology research, genome research, and innovation, through the Canada Foundation for Innovation, with some \$225 million. That would benefit our university communities and our research communities.

For forestry there would be some \$92 million for innovation in forestry. That would be very important for the coastal forest industry in British Columbia.

This budget would keep us on course for a balanced budget by 2015-2016, with diminishing deficits year by year.

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There would be opportunities for apprentices. The budget would create the opportunity for apprentices to get involved in government-funded projects. For example, we would put some \$258 million per year into affordable housing, and there would be incentives to encourage the hiring of apprentices so that they could advance their skill level through the journeyman level and participate in meeting the need for those skilled trades. There would be measures to match graduates with job experience, with some \$70 million for internship programs.

There would also be training programs for aboriginal students on reserve and for post-secondary education. AFN National Chief Shawn Atleo has laid out an ambitious goal for education for first nations students. One of his targets is education and economic opportunities. We want to support him in helping first nations young people gain the skills to participate in the economy of tomorrow. It is the key to a better future. Some \$240 million would be set aside to help first nations youth in B.C. and across Canada access the skills and training they need to participate in large economic projects, such as those in the resource sector, that in many cases are happening right in their own neighbourhoods.

The commitment to long-term, stable infrastructure is extremely important to our communities. Just in the last couple of months, we have had many announcements in my own communities. Small communities have benefited from a program called the community infrastructure improvement fund. Under that program, there were projects like one in Oceanside Place in the Regional District of Nanaimo. Replacing all the lighting in that skating arena with high-intensity lights to lower electrical use and emissions and provide better lighting at the same time.

Through the same program we had announcements in Parksville about replacing the community sports field and upgrades to improve accessibility. The Lions Club put in an outdoor adult gymnasium. Our Parksville Lions Club members are tremendous community citizens. They have run a Lions venture park there for years for children, and now they are expanding outdoor exercise opportunities for adults. I am very pleased that the infrastructure program is there to help them with that project.

Out in Ucluelet, we had announcements for the Ucluelet Chamber of Commerce through the community infrastructure fund.

The gas tax fund is important to our communities. We have had major water upgrades across Vancouver Island. I note many announcements in the Nanaimo and Parksville areas and at Qualicum Beach, with major water storage enhancement, over the last number of years.

This budget would implement pooled registered pension plans. Our colleague, the minister of state, was out in my riding and did a great job introducing that. B.C. brought in legislation to advance pooled registered pension plans.

I note that one of the members opposite talked about the previous Liberal government starting a \$1 billion gas tax fund. We appreciate giving the Liberals credit for that. We raised that to \$2 billion, and now we would index it to help communities come up with the infrastructure they need.

I would be remiss if I did not draw attention to the Pacific Salmon Foundation getting the \$6 Pacific salmon stamp. That is all going back into community projects for the salmon enhancement project, “bringing them back, stream by stream”, working with local volunteers. The PSF has tremendous local support. I go to fundraisers for it every year. This would give it nearly \$1 million more in funding for those great projects in my community.

● (1700)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, listening to this speech is a little like reading a Sears catalogue; this item costs this much and that item costs that much. However, I do not see a coherent plan for infrastructure. It seems to me that a lot of opportunities are being missed here. There are no priorities. The government is doing a little of this and a little of that.

There are no priorities in this so-called plan. Moreover, this plan should include a discussion with the provinces to see how we can better invest our money in infrastructure of the future all across Canada.

Does my colleague think there is a plan behind all these infrastructure projects? Were priorities and objectives set?

[*English*]

Mr. James Lunney: Mr. Speaker, this is not the first infrastructure program we have rolled out for the provinces. In fact, in 2007 we had the largest infrastructure program in Canadian history, \$33 billion over seven years, which is now being replaced by a \$53-billion program over 10 years.

We are used to working with our partners, the provinces, the territories and the municipalities, in determining their priorities. From Ottawa, we cannot tell people where the best investments are.

The gas tax fund in British Columbia, by the way, is managed by the UBCM, the Union of British Columbia Municipalities. It collectively manages that fund. It gets together and talk about how that money will be invested in communities across the area, the municipalities appeal for those funds and they come up with great solutions that help in our area.

I will read a quote for the member's benefit. I think she would be very pleased to hear this:

The Canadian Urban Transit Association...today applauded the federal government's Building Canada Plan as a major step for planning and developing public transit in Canadian communities....We're really pleased to see this kind of commitment for public transit infrastructure...Never before has a federal government invested so much in public transit...This budget provides a solid—

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● (1705)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please. Other members still need to pose questions.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Westmount—Ville-Marie.

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, listening to my hon. colleague, everything is sweetness and light and everything is exactly what all Canadians want.

However, there is always a price to pay for these things. Since the government came into power in 2006, by this summer it will have added close \$160 billion to the debt. The debt is something that, unfortunately, we cannot hide. It is not going to go away. It is going to have to be paid back at some point.

What does my hon. colleague think a government should do with respect to addressing the debt that will be passed on to our children and our grandchildren and that now exceeds \$600 billion?

Mr. James Lunney: Mr. Speaker, as I started my remarks, I talked about how we paid down \$39 billion on the debt. Many of the members of the opposition have said that we squandered a surplus. We cannot pay down debt until we balance the budget.

What we are doing through the great work of the Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Finance and consulting with Canadians across the country is moving toward balanced budgets by maintaining the transfers to the people who depend upon them, the provinces for the social programs they require, for health care, and they are being increased as promised. We are also maintaining transfers to individuals and we are moving toward a balanced budget on target for 2015 through these very prudent measures that are included in budget 2013.

Mr. Ryan Leef (Yukon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with our hard-working member from Calgary Centre.

I will start my remarks today with a great quote from our Prime Minister when he was up in the Yukon territory this summer. He said, “that great national dream—the development of northern resources—no longer sleeps. It is not down the road. It is happening now”.

Economic action plan 2013 and this year's budget is a direct reflection of those comments and sentiments and is our government's focus on the north as a priority.

I would like to highlight the fact that this year's budget, economic action plan 2013, has a direct line item to support Yukon College's Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining. Our government and our Prime Minister recognize that mining and responsible resource development in the north will provide that vital opportunity for people of the north. It will create Yukon jobs for Yukon people. This technical and trades facility investment will allow Yukoners to stay at home while they study. It will allow them that critical opportunity to access the kinds of jobs that will be available for them in the job market. It will give them the opportunity to come out of school and go right into the workforce. What we heard time and time again, as we did consultations across the territory, was that the jobs were there and Yukon people wanted access to those jobs. However, they needed the training where training was not available.

My hat is off to the great folks at the Yukon College and the Yukon government, who have worked in close partnership with us to ensure this becomes a reality and to our government for recognizing those priorities of the territory by making this a specific budgetary priority.

The other thing we heard clearly from our students who were looking forward to opportunities in the workforce was that they wanted to be able to take advantage of not just jobs in the unskilled portion of the labour market, but they wanted opportunities at the semi-skilled, skilled and highly-skilled levels of the economy, which is booming in Yukon right now.

This is a direct opportunity to provide that for Yukon people. It is not just Yukon people for Yukon jobs. It will be highly-skilled and semi-skilled jobs for Yukon people, keeping people right in our territory to study for their career path and opportunity. This is wonderful news in the budget. I am looking forward to the future and seeing the development of Yukon College's Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining. The people in our communities will be able to take full advantage of this and they certainly look forward to it.

I would be remiss if I did not talk about another thing our government responded quite well to, and that was what Yukon people wanted out of the exploration, mining and resource development boom of our territory. They wanted to ensure they would see some rewards out of the exploration and resource development that was going on. This past summer, our Prime Minister signed a historic resource revenue sharing agreement with the Yukon territory that would allow the people of Yukon to see greater benefits from resource extraction in the territory. Again, that is another signal that our government understands the needs of the north. It understands the benefits to the people and the reasonable requests that the great folks of the Yukon territory have when it comes to labour market opportunities.

We are certainly seeing that through the lower than national average unemployment rate and the vitality and growth of our communities. Right now, it is a wonderful part of our country to be in. Certainly all signs are indicating, as the Prime Minister put it, that the north's time has come.

● (1710)

The other thing I want to highlight is we have maintained our commitment from the 2011 campaign. I remember clearly telling the great people of Yukon that we were going to focus on returning Canada to balanced budgets. We were going to do so in two key ways. First, we would not raise taxes for Canadian families. Second, we would not cut the transfer payments to the territories and balance our budgets on the backs of the provinces and territories through transfer payments.

Once again, we have not only maintained that commitment, we have actually increased the transfer payments to the provinces and territories. Our territory has certainly benefited from that. This year's payment is \$861 million, up from \$809 million last year. Our social transfer payments have increased. Our health care transfer payments have increased.

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Why is that important? It is important because it allows the territory and our municipalities the ability to control their own path forward and to control their own destiny. They can make longer term plans for what they want to achieve as a territory, in partnership with their municipalities and the great communities that exist in Yukon. It also allows them to meet their education and health care targets and their social and environmental responsibilities.

I know the people of Yukon and the Yukon government certainly appreciate our commitment to ensure that the transfer payments to the territories are not cut, as we have seen under previous Liberal governments.

I can highlight those quickly. If we look at past transfer payments, I did highlight that the grand total this year was \$861 million, of which \$817 million was through the territorial formula financing program. When we reflect on that, it is an increase of \$316 million from what we received under previous Liberal governments.

The health care transfer gives \$32 million to the territory. That is an increase of almost \$10 million, or 43% more than what we received under Liberal governments. Our Canadian social transfer is an increase of \$10 million, or 32%.

In all areas, our government has maintained its commitment not to balance the deficit and not to bring us back to balanced budgets by slashing transfers to the territory. That is certainly a significant step forward.

We are maintaining our commitments. We are not raising taxes on Canadian families and we are achieving a return to balanced budgets by 2015. We are working hard at that and we are well on our way. That is great news to celebrate.

When we did consultations across the territory this summer, I was happily joined by several ministers. I did a number of consultations on my own as well. We certainly heard from community to community how popular the building Canada fund was and how important it was to ensure the territory was surviving through the global economic crisis that we saw in the 2008 recession. We heard consistently from our folks in Yukon that they wanted the return of the building Canada fund.

We now have the building Canada fund back at record levels. It is the largest and longest infrastructure fund that the country has ever seen. I know our municipalities are going to be very happy about that. It is something for which they lobbied hard. It is something they encouraged us to keep. They encouraged us to keep the name. They liked it so much and it reflected what they were trying to achieve.

The municipalities are all celebrating the indexing and the permanency of the gas tax fund right now because these things will allow our municipalities to make core plans and project their destiny well into the future, beyond the nose of a mandate for tomorrow and beyond a one-year budget cycle. This is allowing our municipalities, our towns and our communities to project well into the future.

There are a whole host of other things contained in the budget from which Yukon and our nation will benefit. I obviously do not have time to get into all of those things, but I did want to highlight that. I wanted to highlight some of the key things of which we were asked.

•(1715)

[*Translation*]

The new roadmap reflects a commitment that will increase the vitality of Canada's official language minority communities. It helps strengthen linguistic duality. Canada's two official languages are an integral part of our history, our culture and our national identity. I am proud of our Franco-Yukon community.

[*English*]

I am proud of the contribution that our Francophone community makes to the vibrant culture of the Yukon Territory. It is important to me that we continue that road map, which is something that was defined as extremely important to the Francophonie of the Yukon. I am glad that is contained within this budget as well.

I look forward to celebrating all the good news in budget 2013, the economic action plan, throughout this year, as we move forward and secure Canada's and the Yukon's long-term future for jobs, growth and long-term prosperity.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jonathan Tremblay (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I do not know what reason we have to be proud of this government, which has been running a deficit since 2008, despite many promises to balance the budget. The Conservatives keep putting it off, and now it has been put off until it is time for the next election in 2015, which is a bit suspicious.

In his latest budget, the Minister of Finance has once again shown us that he is abandoning the regions and economic development. My Conservative Party colleague may not agree, but the Conservatives decided to cut the budget for the Economic Development Agency for the Regions some time ago.

They are currently cutting labour-sponsored funds. In Quebec, venture capital is derived mainly from these funds, which are essential to economic development.

Will the hon. member admit that the minister made a big mistake and ask him to reverse his decision to eliminate these funds?

[*English*]

Mr. Ryan Leef: Mr. Speaker, I do agree with my hon. colleague that I do not agree with him.

The member asked what we have to be proud of, and so I will read a couple of things that we have to be proud of.

Here is a quote from the National Association of Career Colleges:

Thanks to the reforms proposed in this budget, including the new Canada Job Grant, an increased number of unemployed and underemployed Canadians will be able to obtain training that they need to access jobs that are in demand now, and will be in the future. [...] The 2013 budget introduced by this government will benefit Canadian job-seekers as well as employers seeking qualified and skilled employees.

I am proud of that. I am proud of the third-party endorsement for this bill, which has been like no other.

I did not get to touch on housing, which is obviously important to the north, and we have a record investment in that.

Here is what Habitat for Humanity has to say:

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The Harper government's renewed investment in affordable housing comes as great news for low-income families looking to buy a safe, decent and affordable Habitat home and for young Canadians who receive apprenticeship training on Habitat build sites, developing trade skills that lead to good jobs.

The list goes on and on. I have never seen third-party endorsement so significant for a budget, as we have for economic action plan 2013. I am certainly very proud of that.

● (1720)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to provide comment in regard to health care.

When we think of health care in Canada, former Prime Minister Brian Mulroney almost destroyed the national health care plan because he was prepared to allow tax point transfers as opposed to providing up-front cash. It was Prime Minister Chrétien who instituted guaranteed cash allotments, and yes, there was a bit of reduction. However, Paul Martin established a health care accord that guaranteed annual funding increases to health care.

Today, because of Liberal administrations, we have the highest number of cash dollars going to individual provinces. On the other hand, the current Conservative government, in dealing with health care services, refuses to meet with the premiers across this country to come up with a new health care accord.

The member asks for relevance. It was this member who talked about health care and now he has to answer a question regarding it. The question is: When is the Conservative government going to have a new health care accord to assure Canadians that the government is prepared to continue to have annual increases in the financing of our national health care program?

Mr. Ryan Leef: Mr. Speaker, I always appreciate my hon. colleague's interventions.

I do remember the Liberal government's leadership. I remember that it cut transfers to the territories. We were laying off doctors and nurses. I remember that quite well. Our government is not putting the territory in that position.

My hon. colleague asked when our leadership is going to meet with the premiers.

I can say first-hand that the Prime Minister of our country meets directly with the premier of my territory. I have been present when he has done that. The ministers are in and out of my territory all the time meeting with the territorial representatives and ministers there. They are meeting with the premier. The premier has been here with his ministers as recently as this year. The relationship between the territorial government and our government is tremendous. They are talking about the health care transfers.

Again, I mentioned that the health transfer has an increase of \$10 million, which is 43% more than that of the Liberal government in less than six years—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): We have reached the end of the time provided for questions and comments in this particular round.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Calgary Centre.

Ms. Joan Crockett (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am rising today in the House of Commons as the member of Parliament

for Calgary Centre to talk about something that matters to every Canadian and every Calgarian, and that is opportunity. Our budget, economic action plan 2013, paves the way for every Canadian woman, man and child to have a bright future filled with opportunity. That is something we prize as Conservatives and something we prize in Calgary. We get it. This budget gets it. Canadians get it.

This is a budget that has an \$18.7-billion deficit on the road to being balanced in 2015. Some in my riding would like us to go even further, faster, and that is because Albertans have seen very positive benefits from balanced budgets. A balanced budget is what boosted Alberta from the economic doldrums of the 1990s to become the economic engine of Canada. It is what took Saskatchewan from being a have-not province to prosperity, with the highest growth rate in the country. Today, it is enticing kids to come home, to live, work and raise their families again in Saskatchewan. That is why our government will balance our budget in 2015.

Ralph Klein, who is much thought of these days, started Canadians down this path by rejecting tired recipes for economic disaster. As John Maynard Keynes pontificated, when times are bad one borrows, and when times are good one pays back. However, that never works. Our Conservative government's action plan keeps Canadians firmly on the path to jobs, growth and long-term prosperity. It is a common sense budget with time-tested techniques that work, regardless of what people hear from the opposition.

While the NDP is for carbon taxes, we are for cutting taxes. While the opposition claims to stand up for workers, we are the party that has created nearly a million jobs. While the NDP would introduce a \$21 billion carbon tax, we have cut taxes 150 times since 2006. In fact, we have left the average Canadian family with \$3,300 more in their pockets than when we took office. Where the Leader of the Opposition goes to Washington to, guess what, sabotage trade and attack our industry, we are taking the most ambitious approach to trade that this country has ever had, seeking 66 free trade deals around the world. It is clear that the results are in.

I am happy to say that under the leadership of our Prime Minister, Canada has the best economy, the best growth record and the best job record in the G7. While people in Europe, Greece and Cyprus are racked with uncertainty because of the very fragile financial situation they are in, Canadians see a future that is laden with opportunity that is waiting to be seized. However, we realize that more needs to happen. There are still Canadian citizens in my riding who are without work. We get that. This budget gets that. Canadians get that.

Let us hear what is being said about the Canadian jobs plan. Engineers Canada stated, "The steps the federal government is proposing will ensure that Canada has the talent it needs to drive our economy". The Canadian Chamber of Commerce stated, "The measures...are a significant step forward in the federal government's attack on Canada's skills challenge".

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The Canadian Taxpayers Federation applauds the government's plan to overhaul job training and to keep a lid on spending. It stated, "It's good to see Ottawa getting training money directly in the hands of young workers so they can land a good-paying job". Finally, Christopher Smillie of the Canadian Building Trades of the AFL-CIO, who represents 200,000 workers, stated, "This budget is kind of Nirvana for a group like ours that represents these skilled workers.... It's...[a] common-sense approach".

Where should we look when we want trustworthy information on the budget? Do we look to the reckless attacks of the opposition or instead to the honest, non-partisan comments of people like Smillie, who stand for hard-working Canadians and are excited about the new opportunities that this budget promises? There is a simple reason the skills training has been so well received and that is because it started with Canadians. We listened to what they said.

● (1725)

The Canadian Chamber of Commerce saw a massive skills shortage looming due to a demographic shift caused by retirements. In my own riding, during pre-budget consultations the Calgary chamber, seniors groups, corporations and even the volunteer sector made it clear that the number one issue they saw facing Canada was the skills shortage.

We heard these warnings, and we have acted. The Canada jobs plan will offer opportunities for more carpenters, electricians, plumbers, pipefitters, welders and others. It was same story that we heard from coast to coast to coast. Calgarians' concerns are the same as Canadians' concerns.

We get that. The budget gets it. Canadians get it. That is why our Minister of Finance has been acting so decisively. We are introducing the Canada jobs grant that provides \$15,000 per person in combined federal, provincial and employer money to help as many as 130,000 Canadians get job skills that are actually in demand. What a shock. It is employers not the government who decide the skills that are needed. We are lowering barriers to get apprentices accredited, boosting apprentices on federal projects, and giving unemployed aboriginal youth a leg up to get the training they need for a brighter and better future.

For under-represented groups in the workforce, we are introducing a \$40 million-a-year opportunities fund for persons with disabilities.

As Conservatives, we believe in creating opportunity for Canadians. Our goal is a sustainable economy, not band-aids that mask what needs to be done to keep our country moving forward. We get it. This budget gets it. Canadians get it.

Finally, in the area of the environment, our government knows that to preserve the richness of opportunity we have now for future generations, careful stewardship of the natural environment is vital. Conservatives, like most Canadians, are environmentalists but we are not radicals. We recognize that the environment and the economy work together to produce our high standard of living and it is only with a strong economy that we can stand strong in protecting the treasure that is Canada's natural world. The environment and the economy are not at war. When one thrives, so does the other. This has been clearly in evidence for the past seven years of Conservative leadership.

Under the Conservatives, our economy has proven itself more steady and resilient than any of the G7 nations. As it has flourished, we have protected more natural parkland than any government in Canadian history. These are areas like Sable Island, the Nahanni and the boreal forest.

We are the first government in Canadian history to actually reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and we are halfway to our goal of reducing emissions 17% by 2020. Under the previous Liberal government, gas emissions actually increased by a staggering 30%.

The economic action plan maintains our momentum. It includes commitments to supporting environmental management and green tech. Environmental funding in this budget includes: \$248 million to strengthen the Meteorological Service of Canada; \$20 million to conserve ecologically sensitive land; \$4 million for more responsible marine management; support for community partnerships to conserve fisheries habitat; renewed funding for Sustainable Development Technology Canada; restoring bridges in national parks; protecting against invasive species; and tax support for clean energy generation through the accelerated capital cost allowance.

Were these just empty gestures? Not according to Sustainable Development Technology Canada. Its president, Vicky Sharpe said:

The investment announced...will continue Canada's leadership in commercializing innovative clean technologies, supporting a thriving part of Canada's economy....

She said that the moves will help them continue innovating, bringing in as much as \$62 billion and 126,000 jobs by 2020. Wow. That says it all. That is environment and economy working together.

To conclude, it is time that the opposition myths that pit the environment against the economy are put to bed. Let us start seeing the environment and the economy as partners in making Canada a land of opportunity for future generations. Our government's recipe for success is low taxes, job creation and protection of the environment. We get it. The budget gets it. Best of all, Canadians get it.

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• (1730)

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her first speech on the federal budget.

When I hear about the commitment of the government to the environment and to a clean energy future, I practically choke. It has come to my attention just this week that even the Alberta minister of the environment had to go to the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment and beg the federal government not to downgrade the standards for coal-fired power plants.

As the member is from Calgary, she well knows that the oil and gas sector has spoken out very loudly in favour of the federal government coming on board with a Canadian energy strategy. The premier of our province has called for the support of the federal government to the Canadian energy strategy. We see nothing in this budget even recognizing the fact that Canadians want that and nothing for the program that all Canadians have asked to come back, as the member claimed that she was consulting her constituents, on the eco-energy home retrofit program.

I am wondering if the member could again stand up and defend the great commitment of the government to the desire of Canadians for a clean energy future.

Ms. Joan Crockatt: Mr. Speaker, because the member is from Alberta, I am sure that she is all too familiar with the position of her own party that the energy industry in Alberta is a disease, when the whole sector has a very proud record of environmental achievement. We are exporting environmental technologies from Canada. We have some of the best environmental technologies on the entire planet. We are proud of that.

It is absolutely deplorable that we hear day after day in the House from this party that our energy industry is not measuring up to high environmental standards. That includes our pipelines and our west coast tanker traffic. It is time we started getting some good information out to the public.

• (1735)

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in response to the remarks by my colleague, it is dishonest for the government to claim credit for the decrease in Canada's greenhouse gas emissions. The biggest credit for change in greenhouse gas emissions must go to the recession that started in 2008-09, which has decreased manufacturing across the country. Credit should go to provincial governments, such as the Government of Ontario and the Government of Alberta. The member's own province of Alberta has put a price on the emissions of fossil carbon. Credit has to go to municipal governments. The member's own city, Calgary, has taken many actions for which it could commend itself. Therefore, the economics of natural gas versus coal have changed.

The member must, to be honest, admit that the government cannot claim credit for the decrease in greenhouse gas emissions in Canada.

Ms. Joan Crockatt: Mr. Speaker, government does not always have to do everything. Government leads the way. Our approach is different from the Liberals and the NDP. They want high taxes, high spending and bloated government. We believe that we show the way for industry and individuals to make better quality decisions.

This question about greenhouse gas emissions comes from the party that saw its emission levels increase by 30%. All the while, it was trying to tell the Canadian public that it adhered to the Kyoto accord. Our government has actually decreased emissions while growing the economy in a global recession and creating almost a million jobs. That speaks for itself.

Ms. Michelle Rempel (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to ask my colleague, who has a neighbouring riding, about the importance of the energy sector to our economy, as opposed to my other colleague from Alberta who fails to understand the importance of that, both to her riding and to the Canadian economy as a whole.

I wonder what my colleague's constituents think about the Liberal government's best idea for the environment being dogging Kyoto or the fact that we are the first government to publish standards for coal-fired electricity. Also, I wonder how her constituents feel about the leader of the NDP's anti-jobs trip to the United States.

As well, how does the budget positively impact both her constituents and mine?

The Deputy Speaker: I am sorry, we are out of time.

Resuming debate. The hon. member for LaSalle—Émard.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was born 55 years ago today.

I was born in a Canadian society that had made choices such as the choice to have an accessible universal health care system and a pension plan so that our seniors could live in dignity. It was a society that had chosen to have an employment insurance program to help workers who lost their jobs. It was a society in which people could still live in safety and prosperity, knowing there were social programs in place to meet their needs.

Canada chose to have these programs for the past 55 years and even before that so that we could have a society where no one would be abandoned.

It is now 2013. What is the government doing to this Canadian society where no one was abandoned?

Last Thursday, the Conservative government tabled its 2013 budget, whose title, "Jobs, Growth and Long-Term Prosperity", is misleading. In fact, this budget contains very few new measures. Instead, it is merely a government public relations exercise.

The Conservatives chose to go with an austerity budget rather than invest to truly address Canada's current economic challenges. This insipid budget speaks of a tired government that has run out of ideas. This budget is all talk and no action.

The Budget

When I talk to people in my riding, they share their concerns. They are concerned about pension reforms, not only for themselves, but for future generations. They are concerned about the employment insurance reforms. They are seeing the social safety net that they could rely on in tough times unravel more and more. They are concerned about the cuts to health care and about this government's constant attacks against environmental protection.

I am just as concerned about the Conservative government's decision to keep making devastating cuts to health care programs, pensions and employment insurance.

I would like to move on to co-operatives, a subject that is very important to me. Last year we celebrated the International Year of Co-operatives. The Conservatives took the opportunity to cut the co-operative development initiative and dismantle the Rural and Co-operatives Secretariat.

Hidden in budget 2013 is a measure that will harm caisses populaires and credit unions, and that is the elimination of the tax credit for those institutions, which are in fact the economic driver of a number of regions in Canada, even Canada as a whole.

Again, this measure illustrates the not-so-hidden intentions of this government to undermine the co-operative movement in Canada. The shift of responsibility for co-operatives to Industry Canada, in response to the report by the Special Committee on Co-operatives, still has not produced any meaningful results.

When will this government stop attacking the co-operative movement and when will the Minister of Industry do his job?

I would now like to move on to the aerospace industry. Last spring and fall, in my role as the industry critic, I met a number of players in the aerospace industry and I visited a number of businesses. Their message was clear: the aerospace industry is at a crossroads and needs a clear sign from the government, namely a predictable, long-term vision of federal programs to allow Canada's aerospace industry to be competitive.

• (1740)

Budget 2013 responded in only a limited way to the recommendations of the Emerson report and did not give that clear sign that this government is serious and committed to recognizing the aerospace industry's strategic importance to Canada.

When Chris Hadfield took command of the international space station, the government, after dragging its feet for more than a year and almost jeopardizing Canadian satellite expertise, finally released funding for the RADARSAT Constellation program.

However, there are serious questions being asked about the future of the Canadian space program because the government continues to deprive the space agency of the funds it needs and the direction that would allow Canada to excel in this sector.

I recently went to Windsor, Ontario, the heart of the auto industry. Workers are worried about the future. A number of plants have closed their doors, which has led to many job losses. Over the years, this sector has been neglected by successive governments, and it is only when confronted by a crisis that the government reacts.

Since 2007, the NDP has been proposing a national strategy for the automotive industry in order to maintain and increase the number of well-paid jobs.

In closing, I would like to point out once again that this budget is an empty shell that has no vision for the future of Canada. This is not a bold and innovative budget. In fact, this budget resembles the government: it is a dull, tired budget mired in an ideology that will lead Canada to a dead end.

• (1745)

The Deputy Speaker: It being 5:45 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of Ways and Means Motion No. 15.

[English]

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

• (1825)

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

(Division No. 649)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambler
Anders	Anderson
Armstrong	Ashfield
Aspin	Baird
Bateman	Benoit
Bergen	Bernier
Bezan	Blaney
Boughen	Braid
Breitkreuz	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Brown (Barrie)
Bruinooge	Butt
Calandra	Cannan
Carmichael	Carrie
Chisu	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Crockatt	Daniel
Davidson	Dechert
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dreeshen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra	Fast
Galipeau	Gallant
Gill	Glover

Private Members' Business

Goguen	Goldring	Godin	Goodale
Goodyear	Gosal	Gravelle	Groguhé
Gourde	Grewal	Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)
Harper	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hassainia	Hsu
Hawn	Hiebert	Hughes	Hyer
Hillyer	Hoback	Jacob	Julian
Holder	James	Kellway	Lamoureux
Jean	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Lapointe	Larose
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Latendresse	Laverdière
Kent	Komarnicki	LeBlanc (Beauséjour)	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake	Leslie	Liu
Lauzon	Lebel	MacAulay	Mai
Leef	Leitch	Marston	Martin
Lemieux	Leung	Masse	Mathysen
Lizon	Lobb	May	McCallum
Lukiwski	Lunney	McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie	Michaud	Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Mayes	McColeman	Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)	Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
McLeod	Menegakis	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)	Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Menzies	Merrifield	Mourani	Nantel
Miller	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	Nash	Nicholls
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Nicholson	Nunez-Melo	Pacetti
Norlock	Obhrai	Papillon	Patry
O'Connor	Oliver	Péclet	Pilon
O'Neill Gordon	Opitz	Plamondon	Quach
O'Toole	Paradis	Rae	Rafferty
Payne	Poillievre	Rankin	Ravnat
Preston	Raitt	Raynault	Regan
Rajotte	Rathgeber	Rousseau	Saganash
Reid	Rempel	Sandhu	Scarpaleggia
Richards	Rickford	Scott	Sellah
Ritz	Schellenberger	Sgro	Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
Seeback	Shea	sor)	
Shipley	Shory	Sims (Newton—North Delta)	Sitsabaiesan
Smith	Sopuck	St-Denis	Stewart
Sorenson	Stanton	Stoffler	Sullivan
Strahl	Sweet	Thibeault	Toone
Tilson	Toet	Tremblay	Tumel
Toews	Trost	Valerioté — 133	
Trottier	Tweed		
Uppal	Van Kesteren		
Van Loan	Vellacott		
Wallace	Warawa		
Warkentin	Watson		
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)			
Weston (Saint John)			
Wilks	Williamson		
Wong	Woodworth		
Yelich	Young (Oakville)		
Zimmer — 149			

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion adopted.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

CANADA LABOUR CODE

The House resumed from Friday, March 8 consideration of the motion that Bill C-464, An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code and the Employment Insurance Act (parental leave for multiple births or adoptions), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: Pursuant to an order made on Friday, March 8, 2013, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-464 under private members' business.

● (1835)

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

(Division No. 650)

YEAS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Ashton

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Ashton
Atamanenko	Aubin
Ayala	Bélangier
Bellavance	Bennett
Benskin	Bevington
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe
Boivin	Borg
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brahmi	Brison
Brosseau	Byrne
Caron	Casey
Cash	Chicoine
Chisholm	Choquette
Chow	Christopherson
Cleary	Coderre
Comartin	Côté
Crowder	Cullen
Cuzner	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Day	Dewar
Dion	Dionne Labelle
Donnelly	Doré Lefebvre
Dubé	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Dusseau	Easter
Eyking	Foote
Fortin	Freeman
Fry	Gameau
Garrison	Genest
Genest-Jourdain	Giguère

Private Members' Business

Atamanenko
Ayala
Bellavance
Benskin
Blanchette
Boivin
Boulerice
Brahmi
Brosseau
Byrne
Casey
Chicoine
Choquette
Christopherson
Coderre
Côté
Cullen
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Dewar
Dionne Labelle
Doré Lefebvre
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Easter
Foote
Freeman
Garneau
Genest
Giguère
Goodale
Groguhé
Harris (St. John's East)
Hiebert
Hughes
Jacob
Kellway
Lapointe
Latendresse
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
Leslie
MacAulay
Marston
Masse
May
McGuinty
Michaud
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Mourani
Nash
Nunez-Melo
Papillon
Péclet
Pilon
Quach
Rafferty
Ravignat
Regan
Saganash
Scarpaleggia
Sellah
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)
Sims (Newton—North Delta)
Sitsabaiesan
Stewart
Sullivan
Toone
Turmel

Aubin
Bélangier
Bennett
Bevington
Blanchette-Lamothe
Borg
Boutin-Sweet
Brisson
Bruinooge
Caron
Cash
Chisholm
Chow
Cleary
Comartin
Crowder
Cuzner
Day
Dion
Donnelly
Dubé
Dusseau
Eyking
Fortin
Fry
Garrison
Genest-Jourdain
Godin
Gravelle
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Hassainia
Hsu
Hyer
Julian
Lamoureux
Larose
Laverdière
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Liu
Mai
Martin
Mathysen
McCallum
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Nantel
Nicholls
Pacetti
Patry
Perreault
Plamondon
Rae
Rankin
Raynault
Rousseau
Sandhu
Scott
Sgro
St-Denis
Stoffer
Thibeault
Tremblay
Valeriot — 136

Breitkreuz
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Butt
Cannan
Carrie
Chong
Clement
Daniel
Dechert
Devolin
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Fast
Gallant
Glover
Goldring
Gosal
Grewal
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hillyer
Holder
Jean
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kent
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lauzon
Leaf
Lemieux
Lizon
Lukiwski
MacKay (Central Nova)
Mayes
McLeod
Menzies
Miller
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Norlock
O'Connor
O'Neill Gordon
O'Toole
Payne
Preston
Rajotte
Reid
Richards
Ritz
Seeback
Shipley
Smith
Sorenson
Strahl
Tilson
Toews
Trottier
Uppal
Van Loan
Wallace
Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)
Wilks
Wong
Yelich
Zimmer — 147

Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)
Calandra
Carmichael
Chisu
Clarke
Crockatt
Davidson
Del Mastro
Dreesen
Dykstra
Galipeau
Gill
Goguen
Goodyear
Gourde
Harper
Hawn
Hoback
James
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Komarnicki
Lake
Lebel
Leitch
Leung
Lobb
Lunney
MacKenzie
McColeman
Menegakis
Merrifield
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Nicholson
Obhrai
Oliver
Opitz
Paradis
Poilievre
Raitt
Rathgeber
Rempel
Rickford
Schellenberger
Shea
Shory
Sopuck
Stanton
Sweet
Toet
Trost
Tweed
Van Kesteren
Vellacott
Warawa
Watson
Williamson
Woodworth
Young (Oakville)

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

* * *

[*Translation*]

AIR PASSENGERS' BILL OF RIGHTS

The House resumed from March 22 consideration of the motion that Bill C-459, An Act respecting the rights of air passengers, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-459 under private members' business.

NAYS

Members

Ablonczy
Adler
Albas
Alexander
Allison
Anders
Armstrong
Aspin
Bateman
Bergen
Bezan
Boughen

Adams
Aglukkaq
Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambler
Anderson
Ashfield
Baird
Benoit
Bernier
Blaney
Braid

Private Members' Business

● (1840)

[English]

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

(Division No. 651)

YEAS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Ashton
Atamanenko	Aubin
Ayala	Bélanger
Bellavance	Bennett
Benskin	Bevington
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe
Boivin	Borg
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brahmi	Brisson
Brosseau	Byrne
Caron	Casey
Cash	Chicoine
Chisholm	Choquette
Chow	Christopherson
Cleary	Coderre
Comartin	Côté
Crowder	Cullen
Cuzner	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Day	Dewar
Dion	Dionne Labelle
Donnelly	Doré Lefebvre
Dubé	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Dusseauit	Easter
Eyking	Foote
Fortin	Freeman
Fry	Gameau
Garrison	Genest
Genest-Jourdain	Giguère
Godin	Goodale
Gravelle	Grogoué
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)
Hassainia	Hsu
Hughes	Hyer
Jacob	Julian
Kellway	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Larose
Latendresse	Laverdière
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Leslie	Liu
MacAulay	Mai
Marston	Martin
Masse	Mathysen
May	McCallum
McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Michaud	Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)	Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)	Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Mourani	Nantel
Nash	Nicholls
Nunez-Melo	Pacetti
Papillon	Patry
Péclet	Perreault
Pilon	Plamondon
Quach	Rae
Rafferty	Rankin
Ravignat	Raynault
Regan	Rousseau
Saganash	Sandhu
Scarpaleggia	Scott
Sellah	Sgro
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)	St-Denis
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	Stoffler
Sitsabaiesan	Thibeault
Stewart	Tremblay
Sullivan	Valeriotte — 134
Toone	
Turmel	

NAYS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambler
Anders	Anderson
Armstrong	Ashfield
Aspin	Baird
Bateman	Benoit
Bergen	Bernier
Bezan	Blaney
Boughen	Braid
Breitkreuz	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Brown (Barrie)
Bruinooge	Butt
Calandra	Cannan
Carmichael	Carrie
Chisu	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Crockatt	Daniel
Davidson	Dechert
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dreeshen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra	Fast
Galipeau	Gallant
Gill	Glover
Goguen	Goldring
Goodyear	Gosal
Gourde	Grewal
Harper	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hiebert
Hillyer	Hoback
Holder	James
Jean	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kent	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauzon	Lebel
Leaf	Leitch
Lemieux	Leung
Lizon	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunney
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Mayes	McColeman
McLeod	Menegakis
Menzies	Merrifield
Miller	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Nicholson
Norlock	Obhrai
O'Connor	Oliver
O'Neill Gordon	Opitz
O'Toole	Paradis
Payne	Poillievre
Preston	Raitt
Rajotte	Rathgeber
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Rickford
Ritz	Schellenberger
Seeback	Shea
Shiple	Shory
Smith	Sopuck
Sorenson	Stanton
Strahl	Sweet
Tilson	Toet
Toews	Trost
Trottier	Tweed
Uppal	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vellacott
Wallace	Warawa
Warkentin	Watson
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	
Wilks	Williamson
Wong	Woodworth
Yelich	Young (Oakville)
Zimmer — 149	

PAIRED

Nil

Private Members' Business

The Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

* * *

BAN ON SHARK FIN IMPORTATION ACT

The House resumed from March 25 consideration of the motion that Bill C-380, An Act to amend the Fish Inspection Act and the Fisheries Act (importation of shark fins), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-380.

• (1850)

Before the Clerk announced the results of the vote:

The Speaker: I believe the hon. member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore may wish to explain which way he intended to vote.

Mr. Bernard Trottier: Mr. Speaker, in my enthusiasm, I inadvertently voted twice. My intention was to vote no.

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

(Division No. 652)

YEAS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Ashton
Atamanenko	Aubin
Ayala	Bélangier
Bellavance	Bennett
Benskin	Bevington
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe
Boivin	Borg
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brahmi	Brison
Brosseau	Byrne
Caron	Casey
Cash	Chicoine
Chisholm	Choquette
Chow	Christopherson
Cleary	Coderre
Comartin	Côté
Crowder	Cullen
Cuzner	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Day	Dewar
Dion	Dionne Labelle
Donnelly	Doré Lefebvre
Dubé	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Dusseault	Easter
Eyking	Foote
Fortin	Freeman
Fry	Gameau
Garrison	Genest
Genest-Jourdain	Giguère
Godin	Goldring
Goodale	Gravelle
Grogulé	Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Harris (St. John's East)	Hassainia
Hsu	Hughes
Hyer	Jacob
Julian	Kellway
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Larose	Latendresse
Laverdière	LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leslie
Liu	MacAulay
Mai	Marston
Martin	Masse
Mathysen	May
McCallum	McGuinty
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	Michaud

Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)	Mourani
Nantel	Nash
Nicholls	Nunez-Melo
Pacetti	Papillon
Patry	Péclet
Perreault	Pilon
Plamondon	Quach
Rae	Rafferty
Rajotte	Rankin
Ravignat	Raynault
Regan	Rousseau
Saganash	Sandhu
Scarpaleggia	Scott
Sellah	Sgro
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)	
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	
Sitsabaiesan	St-Denis
Stewart	Stoffer
Sullivan	Thibeault
Toone	Tremblay
Turnel	Valeriote
Williamson	Young (Oakville)— 138

NAYS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambler
Anders	Anderson
Armstrong	Ashfield
Aspin	Baird
Bateman	Benoit
Bergen	Bernier
Bezan	Blaney
Boughen	Braid
Breitkreuz	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Brown (Barrie)
Bruinooge	Butt
Calandra	Cannan
Carmichael	Carrie
Chisu	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Crockatt	Daniel
Davidson	Dechert
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dreeshen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra	Fast
Galipeau	Gallant
Gill	Glover
Goguen	Goodyear
Gosal	Gourde
Grewal	Harper
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hawn
Hiebert	Hillyer
Hoback	Holder
Jean	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kent	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauzon	Lebel
Leaf	Leitch
Lemieux	Leung
Lizon	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunney
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Mayes	McColeman
McLeod	Menegakis
Menzies	Merrifield
Miller	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Nicholson
Norlock	Obhrai
O'Connor	Oliver
O'Neill Gordon	Opitz
O'Toole	Paradis
Payne	Poilevve
Preston	Raitt
Rathgeber	Reid
Rempel	Richards

Private Members' Business

Rickford
Schellenberger
Shea
Shory
Sopuck
Strahl
Tilson
Toews
Trottier
Uppal
Van Loan
Wallace
Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)
Wilks
Woodworth
Zimmer— 143

Ritz
Seeback
Shipley
Smith
Stanton
Sweet
Toet
Trost
Tweed
Van Kesteren
Vellacott
Warawa
Watson

Wong
Yelich

Hiebert
Hoback
Hyer
Jean
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kent
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lauzon
Leaf
Lemieux
Lizon
Lukiwski
MacKay (Central Nova)
Mayes
McLeod
Menzies
Miller
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Nicholson
Obhrai
Oliver
Opitz
Paradis
Payne
Poilievre
Raitt
Rathgeber
Rempel
Rickford
Schellenberger
Shea
Shory
Sopuck
Strahl
Tilson
Toews
Trottier
Uppal
Van Loan
Wallace
Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)
Wilks
Wong
Yelich
Zimmer— 155

Hillyer
Holder
James
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Komarnicki
Lake
Lebel
Leitch
Leung
Lobb
Lunney
MacKenzie
McColeman
Menegakis
Merrifield
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Mourani
Norlock
O'Connor
O'Neill Gordon
O'Toole
Patry
Plamondon
Preston
Rajotte
Reid
Richards
Ritz
Seeback
Shipley
Smith
Stanton
Sweet
Toet
Trost
Tweed
Van Kesteren
Vellacott
Warawa
Watson
Williamson
Woodworth
Young (Oakville)

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

* * *

**CBC AND PUBLIC SERVICE DISCLOSURE AND
TRANSPARENCY ACT**

The House resumed from March 26 consideration of the motion that Bill C-461, An Act to amend the Access to Information Act and the Privacy Act (disclosure of information), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-461 under private members' business.

● (1855)

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

(Division No. 653)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy
Adler
Albas
Alexander
Allison
Anders
Andrews
Ashfield
Baird
Bellavance
Bergen
Bezan
Boughen
Breitkreuz
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Bruinooge
Calandra
Carmichael
Chisu
Clarke
Crockatt
Davidson
Del Mastro
Dreeshen
Dykstra
Fortin
Gallant
Glover
Goldring
Gosal
Grewal
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)

Adams
Aglukkaq
Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambler
Anderson
Armstrong
Aspin
Bateman
Benoit
Bernier
Blaney
Braid
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)
Butt
Cannan
Carrie
Chong
Clement
Daniel
Dechert
Devolin
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Fast
Galipeau
Gill
Goguen
Goodyear
Gourde
Harper
Hawn

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)
Ashton
Aubin
Bélanger
Benskin
Blanchette
Boivin
Boulerice
Brahmi
Brosseau
Caron
Cash
Chisholm
Chow
Cleary
Comartin
Crowder
Cuzner
Day
Dion
Donnelly
Dubé
Dusseau
Eyking
Freeman
Garneau
Genest
Giguère
Goodale
Grogulé
Harris (St. John's East)
Hsu

Angus
Atamanenko
Ayala
Bennett
Bevington
Blanchette-Lamothe
Borg
Boutin-Sweet
Brison
Byrne
Casey
Chicoine
Choquette
Christopherson
Coderre
Côté
Cullen
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Dewar
Dionne Labelle
Doré Lefebvre
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Easter
Foote
Fry
Garrison
Genest-Jourdain
Godin
Gravelle
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Hassainia
Hughes

Jacob
Kellway
Lapointe
Latendresse
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
Leslie
MacAulay
Marston
Masse
May
McGuinty
Michaud
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Nantel
Nicholls
Pacetti
Pécllet
Pilon
Rae
Rankin
Raynault
Rousseau
Sandhu
Scott
Sgro
Sims (Newton—North Delta)
St-Denis
Stoffer
Thibeault
Tremblay
Valerioté — 127

Julian
Lamoureux
Larose
Laverdière
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Liu
Mai
Martin
Mathysen
McCallum
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Nash
Nunez-Melo
Papillon
Perreault
Quach
Rafferty
Ravignat
Regan
Saganash
Scarpaleggia
Sellah
Simm (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
sor)
Sitsabaesan
Stewart
Sullivan
Toone
Turmel

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics.

(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[Translation]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

The House resumed from March 26 consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion to concur in the 19th report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights regarding the recommendation not to proceed further with Bill C-273.

• (1910)

[English]

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

(Division No. 654)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy
Adler
Albas
Alexander
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambler
Anderson
Armstrong

Adams
Aglukkaq
Albrecht
Allen (Welland)
Allison
Anders
Angus
Ashfield

Ashton
Atamanenko
Ayala
Bateman
Benskin
Bernier
Bezan
Blanchette-Lamothe
Boivin
Boughen
Boutin-Sweet
Braid
Brosseau
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Bruinooge
Calandra
Carmichael
Carrie
Chicoine
Chisu
Choquette
Christopherson
Cleary
Comartin
Crockatt
Cullen
Davidson
Day
Del Mastro
Dewar
Donnelly
Dreeshen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dusseau
Fast
Galipeau
Garrison
Genest-Jourdain
Gill
Godin
Goldring
Gosal
Gravelle
Groguhé
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn
Hoback
Hughes
James
Julian
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Komarnicki
Lake
Larose
Lauzon
Lebel
Leef
Lemieux
Leung
Lizon
Lukiwski
MacKay (Central Nova)
Mai
Martin
Mathysen
McColeman
Menegakis
Merrifield
Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Nantel
Nicholls
Norlock
Obhrai
Oliver
Opitz
Papillon
Payne
Perreault

Routine Proceedings

Aspin
Aubin
Baird
Benoit
Bergen
Bevington
Blanchette
Blaney
Borg
Boulerice
Brahmi
Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)
Butt
Cannan
Caron
Cash
Chisholm
Chong
Chow
Clarke
Clement
Côté
Crowder
Daniel
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Dechert
Devolin
Dionne Labelle
Doré Lefebvre
Dubé
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Dykstra
Freeman
Gallant
Genest
Giguère
Glover
Goguen
Goodyear
Gourde
Grewal
Harper
Harris (St. John's East)
Hassaimia
Hiebert
Holder
Jacob
Jean
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kellway
Kent
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lapointe
Latendresse
Laverdière
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Leitch
Leslie
Liu
Lobb
Lunney
MacKenzie
Marston
Masse
Mayes
McLeod
Menzies
Michaud
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Nash
Nicholson
Nunez-Melo
O'Connor
O'Neill Gordon
O'Toole
Paradis
Pécllet
Pilon

Private Members' Business

Poilievre	Preston
Quach	Rafferty
Raitt	Rajotte
Rankin	Rathgeber
Ravignat	Raynault
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Rickford
Ritz	Rousseau
Saganash	Sandhu
Schellenberger	Scott
Seeback	Sellah
Shea	Shiple
Shory	Sims (Newton—North Delta)
Sitsabaiesan	Smith
Sopuck	Stanton
Stewart	Stoffer
Strahl	Sullivan
Sweet	Thibeault
Tilson	Toet
Toews	Toone
Tremblay	Trost
Trottier	Turmel
Tweed	Uppal
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vellacott	Wallace
Warawa	Warkentin
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)	Wilks
Williamson	Wong
Woodworth	Yelich
Young (Oakville)	Zimmer — 244

NAYS

Members

Andrews	Bélanger
Bellavance	Bennett
Brisson	Byrne
Casey	Coderre
Cuzner	Dion
Easter	Eyking
Foote	Fortin
Fry	Gameau
Goodale	Hillyer
Hsu	Hyer
Lamoureux	LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
MacAulay	May
McCallum	McGuinty
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	Mourani
Pacetti	Patry
Plamondon	Rae
Regan	Scarpaleggia
Sgro	Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)
St-Denis	Valeriote — 38

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.**PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS***[English]*

DELAY OR INTERRUPTION OF PRIVATE MEMBERS' HOUR—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: On Wednesday, March 6, 2013, due to many recorded divisions taken that day, private members' hour was cancelled pursuant to Standing Order 30(7). For that reason, the second hour of debate on Motion No. 412, standing in the name of the member for Nipissing—Timiskaming, did not take place.

[Translation]

Standing Order 30(7) states that this business “shall be added to the business of the House on a day to be fixed, after consultation, by the Speaker”. The Standing Orders then set out two conditions for the selection of the new date. First, the Speaker must attempt to “designate that day within the next ten sitting days” and, second, the Speaker must not permit “the intervention of more than one adjournment period”.

[English]

The debate therefore has to take place tomorrow at the latest, following private members' hour. However, I would remind the House that pursuant to an order made on Monday, February 25, 2013, the House will adjourn at 2:30 p.m. I am reluctant to interfere with that schedule, as it precedes an adjournment period for which members will no doubt have already made their travel plans.

Since we are now past 7 p.m., the House would normally be faced with having to reschedule the item, an option that is clearly not possible for the reasons I have just outlined.

[Translation]

Last week I was informed that there were consultations and that it was agreed that the second hour of debate on Motion No. 412 would be added to today's proceedings.

[English]

Being now faced with an unforeseen situation and bound by the provisions of Standing Order 30(7), I wish to inform the House that private members' business will indeed take place today, with the two items scheduled for debate as indicated on the notice paper. In doing so, the Chair is mindful of his obligations to “make all arrangements necessary to ensure the orderly conduct of private members' business”, as set out in Standing Order 94.

I thank hon. members for their collaboration.

It being 7:12 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

* * *

*[Translation]***DISCOVER YOUR CANADA ACT**

The House resumed from November 6, 2012, consideration of the motion that Bill C-463, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (travel expenses), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak about my private member's bill, which I call “Discover Your Canada”.

This bill seeks to amend the Income Tax Act in order to make travel within Canada more affordable for Canadians by providing income tax deductions on the expense of purchasing tickets for taxpayers and their children, for non-business travel by airplane, train or bus, if travel covers at least three different provinces.

Private Members' Business

[English]

During the many speeches we will be hearing on this bill, some members of Parliament will erroneously discuss the potential high cost of the bill. However, this bill is intended to be about unifying Canadians and not about finances. As an accountant and former chairman of the finance committee, I am usually the first person to want to ensure that the numbers add up. I have written Bill C-463 in order that the federal treasury would not be impacted and that this bill would be revenue neutral, while perhaps even being an economic generator.

Therefore, the primary focus of this bill would not be financial. As is evident in the name "discover your Canada act", I want more Canadians to have the option to travel across this country, something that is usually only an option for the more affluent. I want as many Canadians as possible to be able to visit other parts of their great country, and not as a layover to a foreign destination, not as a two-hour drive up to the cabin, and not as a business trip, where all they will see is an airport or perhaps a conference room. We want Canadians to see a part of Canada that is as distant and as different from their own little corner of this great land as possible.

I first got this idea years ago while I was in Vancouver chairing the finance committee during its pre-budget consultations. Anyone who has been to Vancouver can tell us that there are some impressive sights to behold. As a visitor walking the streets after a long day of witnesses telling us how the government should spend its money, I looked up and was astounded by what I saw. I thought that if more Quebecers would see what I am seeing right now, none of them would want to separate. It was every bit as beautiful as my hometown of Montreal, but it was also very different. The vastness of the Pacific Ocean was different from the charm of the St. Lawrence River. The grandeur of the Rocky Mountains was different from the soothing humility of Mount Royal. The modern architecture was different from the classic beauty of Old Montreal. Pictures can never do justice to Canadian scenery, and one can never truly appreciate and feel like it is part of his or her natural heritage until he or she can see it and touch it in person.

In the past, even prior to being a member of Parliament, and afterwards of course, I have been to places in Canada as far east as Newfoundland, as far west as British Columbia and as far north as Yukon and the Northwest Territories. I have found in each place a newer and deeper appreciation for Canada. I am certain that all Canadians would have a better sense of their own national identity if they just had a chance to see parts of this country that are out of reach for some of them now. This is why I have chosen to refer Bill C-463 to the heritage committee instead of the finance committee. The discovery of Canada act would not be about dollars and cents; it would be about allowing Canadians to take ownership of their national heritage by providing them with a bit of assistance and incentive to see their own country.

•(1915)

[Translation]

Having said all this, it would be unlike me not to discuss costs at least a little bit. The deductions I propose in the Discover Your Canada Act are not extravagant. The deductions are also capped, and

conditions to ensure that the deductions are not abused are written into Bill C-463.

As a result, the upper threshold of deductions will not be reached by most eligible travellers, as was confirmed by a Parliamentary Budget Office study I requested for this bill soon after it was introduced.

According to newspaper articles, the government says that this bill will cost money. However, even if the government is able to justify its estimate of the cost of this bill, nothing can compare to the \$5.2 billion that Canadians spent in the United States in 2012.

During the second quarter of 2012, during trips to the United States, Canadians spent \$3.4 million, the most money in 20 years. In June, they spent a record \$1.9 million. This increased spending is a result of the increase in duty free allowances, which went from \$50 to \$200 for a stay longer than 24 hours, and from \$400 to \$800 for a stay of 48 hours. We are talking about travel abroad.

According to the government, this will result in the loss of hundreds of millions of dollars in 2013-14. This is another gift for the American industry.

It is easy to add tax deductions. Administering them will cost the Canada Revenue Agency nothing extra. The Parliamentary Budget Office said so as well.

The last thing I want is for this bill to create more red tape.

When a new income deduction is proposed, there is always a measurable cost, but it is not so easy to calculate the economic spinoffs.

The Parliamentary Budget Office acknowledges that Bill C-463 will generate economic and financial spinoffs, but it cannot calculate those with certainty.

Generally speaking, I can say with confidence that increased travel within Canada is bound to generate positive economic and financial spinoffs.

Increased revenues from provincial and federal sales taxes are one such fiscal benefit.

I know that when I travel, I need to stay somewhere, I need to eat, and I want to take in some local attractions. I like to enjoy a night out on the town, and I enjoy bringing souvenirs back to family and friends. All this costs money and all this will contribute to government revenues in the form of federal and provincial sales tax.

Increased economic activity from more Canadians travelling domestically will also benefit the tourism industry in Canada in addition to industries that see spinoff benefits from increased tourism.

According to Industry Canada, almost 600,000 jobs in Canada are directly generated by tourism in every province and region of the country.

If that is not specific enough, I encourage each member in this chamber to visit the Tourism Industry Association of Canada website, where a breakdown of tourism jobs per riding is available.

Private Members' Business

I took examples from the ridings with the largest cities in the country. Tourism represents 4,905 jobs in Elmwood—Transcona, 5,460 jobs in Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, 9,445 jobs in Vancouver South, 10,080 jobs in Calgary Centre, 11,150 jobs in Trinity—Spadina, and 11,170 jobs in Laurier—Saint-Marie in downtown Montreal. These are just a few examples. There is a list of all the ridings across Canada.

These are real jobs for real people in each and every one of our communities. We need to be cognizant of what stimulating this industry can mean to local economies and the national economy as a whole. The possible benefits are too big to ignore in my opinion.

● (1920)

[*English*]

I could go on, but as I stated earlier, the bill is not about dollars and cents.

Since I introduced the bill back in November, what has struck me most of all is how much Canadians have rallied around this idea. According to a Harris/Decima study released on November 7, 2012, total support for the discover your Canada act stood at 70%, and it enjoyed strong support throughout the country.

For example, the Atlantic region registered 78% approval, Quebec registered 68% approval, Ontario registered 69% approval, Saskatchewan and Manitoba registered 66% approval, Alberta registered 76% approval and British Columbia registered 74% approval.

The same study showed that 39% of Canadians would be more likely to consider travelling within Canada if the discover your Canada act were to become law, while only 5% would be less likely to consider travelling within Canada if the discover your Canada act were to become law, for a net gain of over 34%.

The same study also notes that the bill has the potential to address Canada's growing international travel deficit, which grew by \$91 million in the second quarter of 2012 alone.

Beyond the numbers, I have been humbled by messages of support I have received from Canadians from all over the country who want to see the bill pass. One lady from Alberta wrote to tell me that "Despite not being one of your constituents, I am writing to tell you that I support your recent private member's bill, the discover your Canada act. I live in Alberta. However, I have strong ties to Quebec through my maternal grandparents. In such a vast country as Canada, I would welcome this initiative in assisting my travel within our own borders. Canada has so much to offer".

I cannot go on all day quoting letters and emails, but this is just one of several letters of support I received. They all have the same theme: a desire for us as Canadians and as parliamentarians to implement this idea.

It is not because they want to save money or because they are looking for a handout, but simply because they love their country and like the idea of more Canadians visiting more places within Canada to strengthen their bonds to this country and to each other, especially when we have a travel deficit in this country.

It has long been said that Canada has too much geography and not enough history. In 2017, Canada will have precisely 150 years of history behind it. Our nation's history is no longer in question, but our geography remains both a source of pride and a challenge to our nation's cohesiveness. Facts are facts: there is no inexpensive way for people to traverse such a massive country as Canada. As parliamentarians, we should recognize this reality and react accordingly.

I have chosen 2017 for the coming into force of the bill, because I believe that for Canada's 150th birthday, we should give Canadians the greatest gift we could possibly give them: we should give them Canada.

The government will be investing all kinds of money in celebrating Canada's 150th anniversary, so I am asking the government to think about offering Canadians a choice of where they choose to spend their money and not have the government decide for them.

We do not know how much money the government will put towards the anniversary, but this investment is minimal. There will be events across Canada, as I just stated. We should have Canadians plan today where they want to travel to get to know Canada much better so that they will not be watching the events on a TV screen because they cannot afford the trip. They will be able to watch and participate in these events, up close and in person.

We should remove some of the financial barriers that stop them from exploring this great land and tell them to go out and discover your Canada, because one thing I have learned is that financial incentives are one way to get people to change their behaviour.

Thank you for your time, Mr. Speaker. I am open to questions.

● (1925)

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Lapointe (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is something peculiar in my hon. colleague's choice not to submit this bill to the Standing Committee on Finance. Eighty per cent of the study that we received from the Parliamentary Budget Officer has to do with the bill's financial aspects. One billion dollars has been mentioned. Although it is not this entire amount that would have an impact on the public purse, I have difficulty seeing how my colleague can justify not referring a bill that could have such an impact on the public purse to the Standing Committee on Finance, first and foremost.

Mr. Massimo Pacetti: Mr. Speaker, I started my speech by saying that it had nothing to do with finance. I know that it will cost money because it will be an initiative to get Canadians to travel. The more people travel, the more they will spend.

My bill gives the example of someone who takes the bus across three provinces. This is not going to take two or three hours. It will take at least two or three days. Someone who takes the bus will stop and spend money on food and drink. That traveller might even stop during the trip to sleep in a hotel, not on the bus, or go see the sights. This bus trip might involve all kinds of expenses.

Private Members' Business

Another example is someone who travels by airplane. People usually travel by airplane to go long distances. When you travel far, you spend money. I know that when I travel long distances, I stay in hotels for two or three nights.

All these analyses and all these costs are not in the Parliamentary Budget Officer's figures. I find it unfortunate that the member did not read that. The numbers are not in the billions of dollars; they are in the range of \$10 million to \$30 million, not to mention all the revenue that would go to the government. If I have crunched the numbers properly, when it comes to revenue, the bill's impact will be neutral.

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to know why my colleague chose the rule of crossing at least three different provincial boundaries. I think that if you start out at the far end of the Northwest Territories, cross just one border and go to southern Saskatchewan, for example, you have travelled a fair distance.

I just looked into purchasing airline tickets on the Air Canada site. It costs more to fly from Toronto to Rouyn-Noranda, which is in my riding, than it does to fly from Toronto to Vancouver. There is no logic to the three provinces rule. It is quite commendable to want to travel to far-flung parts of the country, but that does not cover the three provinces rule.

I do not understand why the member chose three provinces. It puts some regions at a disadvantage.

●(1930)

Mr. Massimo Pacetti: Mr. Speaker, that is a good question. This bill is not perfect and will not affect air fares because we did not work with the airlines.

The reason for the bill is to help Canadians get to know one another. What I have seen is that Canada is divided into three regions: eastern, central and western Canada. I would like Canadians to start travelling between the east and the west, passing through central Canada. That is the reason for choosing three provinces.

I do not want someone from Rouyn-Noranda to travel in Ontario, because that is easy to do. I know that the member is absolutely right about the price of an airline ticket. However, I will leave that for another bill at another time. Canadians have to start getting to know one another and discovering Canada. The only way to do that is to get them to travel as far as possible in the regions. When I talk about the regions, I am not talking about going from an urban area to a rural area. I am talking about travelling to eastern, western and central Canada. That is how people can get to know one another. That is the reason for this bill.

[English]

Mr. Bernard Trottier (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak to Bill C-463 brought forward by the Liberal member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel.

[Translation]

I know that the member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel is a proud Canadian, and I commend his efforts to give Canadians the opportunity to get to know their country better.

[English]

This bill is really just a novelty, a gimmicky distraction costing taxpayers over \$200 million a year, without really encouraging tourism within Canada. While the member says his intent is to promote tourism, not only is his ill-considered proposal unfair, but there is absolutely no evidence it would have any effect whatsoever.

In fact, the Tourism Industry Association of Canada has already dismissed this Liberal idea as completely out of touch with the challenges faced by the Canadian tourism sector, saying, “we don't think this is a particularly useful mechanism because Canada's challenge is not a lack of domestic travel”. Indeed, our challenge is finding ways to compete in the international travel market.

In contrast, our government promotes travel in Canada by funding cost-effective programs and events proving that, unlike the Liberals, the Conservative government supports the tourism sector, while safeguarding taxpayer dollars.

Let me start by briefly highlighting our government's role in supporting the tourism industry in Canada.

Canada's strong economic performance during the global recession has been the envy of the world. While these initiatives may not have always been the most talked about, Canada's economic action plan provided funding to several organizations to stimulate the growth of tourism during the global economic downturn and it helped promote our country as a destination for Canadians and visitors alike.

During this time, economic action plan funding was provided to things like the National Trails Coalition, Parks Canada and its National Historic Sites, the Canadian Tourism Commission for greater domestic and international marketing and a grand total of 79 festivals and events through the marquee tourism events program. Our economic action plan also increased tourism-related infrastructure through investments in everything from local parks to convention centres.

Furthermore, our government already supports programs to discover Canada, programs geared to encourage Canadians to explore what is happening culturally outside their own backyards.

In particular, the Department of Canadian Heritage invests over \$105 million every year to provide almost 100,000 youth with opportunities to learn about their country and connect with one another through its youth programs. I should add that these programs can benefit all Canadians, regardless of what region they live in, a point I will return to later in my speech.

Private Members' Business

In addition, the government supports programs to foster Canadian identity for people of all ages such as celebrate Canada, which encourages Canadians to come together in their communities to discover and appreciate the wealth and diversity of Canadian society and understand the significance of the rich heritage Canadians all share. These types of measures and programs achieve two important results: they boost our economy and they promote tourism in Canada.

Beyond what our government already does to boost tourism in Canada, the bill before us today is fundamentally flawed. Providing an income tax deduction for travel expenses of up to \$2,000 for individuals and each of their dependants under the age of 16 raises concerns about fairness.

Let me explain.

Under the proposal, only travel within Canada that crosses three provincial boundaries is eligible. Here is the first problem with that. This requirement may disproportionately benefit some regions and favour particular travel routes. Given the shorter distances between provinces in Atlantic Canada, less travel would be required to meet the eligibility criteria.

Furthermore, the three provincial boundaries rule would unquestionably favour particular routes. For example, travelling from Halifax to Toronto by train or bus would cross three provincial boundaries and qualify for tax relief, whereas air travel, assuming the flight uses U.S. airspace, might not qualify.

The list of inequities continues. The value of the deduction would depend on the mode of travel: 100% for travel by bus; 75% for travel by train; and 40% for travel by airplane. From the onset, this makes no sense.

It bears repeating that the breakdown of how the deduction would be calculated makes no sense. Why should someone travelling by bus get a higher deduction than someone travelling by train or plane? Why does it exclude travelling by car or even by boat? There is no question this bizarre distinction is completely unfair.

Not only that, but Bill C-463 would provide more tax relief to higher-income individuals who tend to travel more and spend more on travel than lower-income families. Not only would higher-income individuals generally claim more, but the tax relief stemming from the proposed deduction would also be higher for individuals who were in higher personal income tax brackets, which vary from 15% to 29% federally.

● (1935)

Our government has been very clear. We believe in tax fairness for all Canadians. This discrimination alone is reason enough to vote against the bill, but there are many other reasons to vote against this bill.

On this side of the House, that is the government side, we believe a law that is meant to encourage interprovincial travel should, at the very least, encourage Canadians to travel. With respect to Bill C-463, there is no evidence that the proposal would encourage individuals to travel more often, over \$200 million a year with no result. Not only that, but individuals who plan to travel anyway would gain significant benefits from the deduction. It would

represent a windfall, again an unfair tax advantage without actually increasing tourism within Canada.

Furthermore, the proposal only recognizes the cost of tickets for traveling by bus, train or air, not other major travel expenses, such as lodging or car rentals, that may continue to be an obstacle for people to travel.

Finally, as I have already mentioned, the cost of the proposal would be significant. Preliminary estimates suggest that based on existing travel patterns and expenditures, the passage of Bill C-463 would cost about \$215 million a year.

In a time of a certain fiscal restraint that we have now, it is not the time for a novelty Liberal subsidy, or as *National Post* columnist Kelly McParland put it, “silly ways to spend even more borrowed money trying to manipulate Canadian behaviour, just like the old days”.

Our government has been working diligently to keep taxes low and the economy strong in the face of turbulent economic challenges from across the world. Our economic action plan has delivered results for Canadian families. We will stay the course.

I would ask every member of the House to vote against the bill. It is plainly not in the best interests of Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Lapointe (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has pointed out an inconsistency. Specific types of transportation were chosen. Ferries are one example.

I would like the member to expand on how this lack of reflection causes certain problems—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): I would remind the member that he has the floor to resume debate.

The hon. member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup.

Mr. François Lapointe: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to have been recognized to speak to this subject.

The bill before us has the best of intentions, but the result is questionable and rather inconsistent. Unfortunately, the NDP will not be able to support this bill. I will take the time to summarize the bill so that those at home will understand what we are talking about.

This bill provides that taxpayers may deduct, from their taxable income in a given year, the cost of purchasing tickets for the taxpayer or a child or children of the taxpayer for non-business travel that involves crossing at least three different provincial boundaries. The bill is designed to encourage Canadian taxpayers to travel within the country in order to increase domestic tourism by providing a maximum deduction of \$2,000 a year from taxable income.

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It is complex and yet it is not. Basically, people need to travel a lot and need to cross three borders. If they can prove that they were not travelling on business, they can get a non-refundable deduction of up to \$2,000.

The NDP has found six major flaws in this bill.

This bill is fiscally irresponsible. It would allow for up to \$1 billion in tax deductions, but this measure would directly cost \$110 million. A little earlier, I heard my hon. colleague say that if people travel, they will spend more money, but that principle does not apply here, especially in light of the current situation with the tourism industry.

Tourism within Canada is being squeezed dry. Domestic travel accounts for a majority of the travel in the country and this proportion continues to increase. There is no reason to believe that creating more travel in an industry that has already been squeezed dry would suddenly create enough economic activity to compensate for the \$110 million.

The Canadian Tourism Commission is asking for about \$110 million to create a real international marketing program. The tourism industry is always lamenting the fact that we do not have enough foreign tourism. Canada's tourism industry is already struggling to stay afloat with domestic travel.

There will surely be cases of fraud. How can someone prove that they travelled for work but stayed a few days at the destination to visit the beach or do some shopping? How do they sort that out come tax time? It does not appear as though that aspect of this bill was thought through.

Consider the increased amount of paperwork if, for example, the government has to contact a taxpayer or a business if there is any doubt that travel or an application for a tax refund was associated with business travel instead of leisure travel. How would we manage that? The bill does not address that problem.

The other important point is that this is a regressive policy. Only families that are well off can spend thousands of dollars on transportation costs. The study we received showed that 70% of the tax benefits associated with this bill will go to families that earn a minimum of \$50,000. We want to share Canada and get Canadians to travel. However, we must help the lower-income families who will never be able to see Vancouver, not the well-off families who could afford a trip to Vancouver regardless.

This bill does nothing to address the fact that it is not easy to travel within Canada. One of the major problems with the tourism industry is that transportation services are irregular and inadequate. For example, train service out east between Montreal and the Maritimes was recently reduced by 50%. Providing a credit on a service that is no longer available is like the chicken and the egg. This bill has it backwards. First we must ensure that our infrastructure can provide adequate service.

Another point concerns the harmful effects of greenhouse gases. For the same reason that those who are well off will be more likely to be able to cross three borders—since that is what the bill requires—they will also be more likely to travel by plane to claim this tax

credit. Once again, this bill favours the mode of transportation that causes the most pollution. It does not address this problem.

● (1940)

We can imagine another ridiculous scenario that the bill does not cover. Imagine that a family crosses three borders. Family members leave Quebec, go to New Brunswick and want to go to Prince Edward Island. One of the children tells his father that he wants to go to PEI by ferry. However, the tax credit does not apply to ferries. The father will have to apologize to his child and tell him that they will not be able to go to PEI because the method of transportation for getting there is not covered by the tax deductions for non-business, family travel. This bill has all sorts of problems like this one.

The asymmetry of the provinces, which is specific to Canada, is another factor that is completely unfair to the western provinces. I can cross three provinces and get a tax credit by going to spend a weekend with my family in the Maritimes, since I live in eastern Quebec. It would be impossible for someone who lives in British Columbia to even think about getting a tax credit for making a short weekend trip by train when he has two or three days off. It is not fair to the western provinces. The bill does not address this problem. The bill does not address the tourism industry's main problem.

The tourism industry is calling for more international tourism. Domestic tourism is being squeezed dry. Canadians are doing all they can right now. There is a lack of marketing to ensure that domestic tourism stays the same and even continues to grow and to convince hundreds of thousands of new international travellers to come to Canada.

With the emergence of BRIC, more and more people are travelling. They have money and we are not reaching out to claim our portion of it. That is the real problem. If this bill is passed, \$110 million will be invested, but it will not be invested in solving the tourism industry's real problem.

We would like to ensure that agreements with the provinces and municipalities result in affordable infrastructure, so that low-income families can afford train tickets and go on a trip. That is our goal. We would also like to see the tourism industry finally gain increased revenues from international tourism.

None of these solutions and priorities are part of the bill. We cannot support a bill so badly put together. It is not right to introduce a bill and expect a committee to fix it.

What about families who travel by car? What about families who travel in two provinces by train, then take a ferry to a third province? Do they suddenly stop being eligible for the tax credit? What if a man goes on a business trip with his family tagging along, and they vacation together for seven or eight days? Should they report that they were travelling for business or for pleasure?

Such a convoluted and unmanageable solution is not acceptable. Some people think that if a bill is flawed, it can just be sent to committee to be fixed up.

However, when a bill creates more problems than it solves, there is no way we can support it at second reading and send it to committee.

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Sadly, that is the position New Democrats find themselves in today. The bill was poorly conceived and poorly drafted. It would be costly and difficult to implement, and it would not solve the problems facing Canada's tourism industry.

● (1945)

[English]

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure that I rise today to speak to Bill C-463, the discover your Canada act. I want to thank my colleague from Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel for introducing this legislation and for giving the House an opportunity to discuss the importance of our tourism sector and to address Canada's travel deficit.

The goal of the bill is to make it easier for Canadians to travel within their own country. It would amend the Income Tax Act and create a tax credit of up to \$2,000 for Canadian taxpayers who cross at least three provincial or territorial borders on personal travel. This credit would help reduce the cost of holiday transportation by covering eligible travel expenses. Taxpayers would be able to claim the amount not only for their own expenses but also for their children. This would provide much needed support for Canada's tourism sector.

According to the Tourism Industry Association of Canada, this sector represents more of Canada's GDP than the agriculture, forestry and fisheries combined. It generates \$78.8 billion of economic activity annually. It is responsible for more than \$15.9 billion of export revenue despite this growing travel deficit. It generates \$10 billion in federal government revenue and fosters over 600,000 jobs across the country.

Tourism plays an important role in the economy in my riding in Nova Scotia. People come to Kings—Hants from all over the country and all over the world to marvel at the world's highest tides, to come to the beautiful Annapolis Valley, to come to Windsor, the birthplace of hockey, and also to enjoy our growing food and wine industries.

Many of us in the House represent Canadians who make a living in the tourism sector. We know how vital this sector is to the Canadian economy. We also know how worried participants in this sector are about the future of this industry and the growing travel deficit.

There is a gap between how much money Canadian tourists are spending abroad and how much money international tourists are spending here in Canada. This gap is growing, and the government used budget 2012 not to address it but to slash support for tourism in Canada. By cutting the Canadian Tourism Commission's budget by \$14.2 million each and every year, the government is cutting the commission's ability to promote Canada abroad and to attract international tourists to Canada.

David Goldstein, president of the Tourism Industry Association of Canada said:

The travel deficit has widened dramatically since 2002.... We used to be the seventh in the world in 2007 when it came to international arrivals. We are now the 18th. We used to have 20 million international visitors in 2002 and now have 16 million....

The fact that we are now contributing almost a third to Canada's trade deficit is somewhat shocking....

Last December Mr. Goldstein told *The Globe and Mail* the Conservative cuts are hurting the sector.

While other countries are making tourism a priority and investing in marketing to attract international visitors, Canada lags behind. Australia, for instance, outspends Canada by three to one in terms of tourism marketing dollars, yet according to the Canadian Tourism Commission every dollar invested in direct advertising is actually earned back 37 times over.

The Canadian Chamber of Commerce has also asked the government to make tourism a priority. In a recent report on tackling the top 10 barriers to competitiveness, the chamber identified uncompetitive travel and tourism strategies as one of the most serious barriers to success in the Canadian economy. That report cited that tourism is a major industry in every reach of the country, but it is struggling.

Instead of damaging the sector's ability to market itself abroad, the government should recognize the risks associated with Canada's travel deficit and reverse these cuts to our tourism sector. We need a real tourism strategy and this legislation could be part of that. Bill C-463 gives the House the opportunity to help reduce our travel deficit by encouraging more Canadians to discover their country and spend their tourism dollars here at home. Canadians are onside. According to Harris/Decima, a public survey conducted last fall showed 70% of Canadians support the idea of a tax credit for travel within Canada.

● (1950)

It is not just about dollars and cents and business. It is about national unity and the reality that encouraging more Canadians to travel within our country and to understand regions within our country is important.

I have heard some of my colleagues from both the Conservative Party and the New Democratic Party speak to the bill. I can accept that perhaps they can identify a design flaw or a problem that could be addressed at committee. However, the reality is that the intention of the bill is sound. The direction of the bill makes sense. Canadians want to find more ways to support their ability to travel within Canada.

I would urge members from all parties to support the legislation and to send it to committee. If there are technical design flaws that could be addressed at committee, that is fine. We are open to that. My colleague is open to that. However, we need to send it to committee in order to have a broader discussion on how we can strengthen tourism in Canada and, more fundamentally, how we can unite the country by giving more Canadian families the opportunity and the incentive to travel within Canada.

I heard my Conservative colleagues say earlier tonight that it would complicate the tax system by providing an incentive for somebody to do something. My goodness gracious, the Conservatives have grown the tax code by one-sixth since coming to power, with tax incentives for almost everything. The reality is that they have done that because people like a tax incentive to pursue one behaviour or another. The reality is that travel within our own country is a meritorious and positive economic activity, but it is also good for national unity.

Why would we not support any initiative that would enable Canadian families to spend more time within their country and spend more of their money in other regions of the country? What a boon to national unity.

I was born in 1967. A few months before I was born, my parents were at Expo 67. Now I cannot say that their trip to Montreal that summer was totally responsible for what happened, but how many Canadians, in 1967, went to Montreal as part of Expo 67? At what point in our nation's history were we as united as a country as we were when families from across the country went to Montreal in 1967?

I am not saying that this private member's bill would achieve the same level of national unity that Expo 67 did, but it is a start. It is a beginning. It is a recommencement of that spirit of voyageur that unites Canadians so that we will travel to other parts of our country and we will experience other cultures. God knows how many more parliamentarians would be born as a result of that.

I want to tell members that I am proud to be voting for and supporting Bill C-463 because I want it to be sent to committee. I want it to be studied. I want all parties to be able to contribute to shaping a national tourism strategy, the genesis of which might just be part of this legislation.

I think if there is a concern about eligibility, if there is a concern about progressivity and about how we could ensure that low-income people would benefit from this, let us address it. Perhaps if we would ensure it is fully refundable, that would address the concerns, for instance, for low-income Canadians. Certainly the tax credits offered by the government for disability tax credits, caregiver tax credits, firefighter tax credits, all these different tax credits, have been non-refundable. I do not support that. I believe full refundability makes sense in order for this to be progressive.

Whatever the issues that exist, they could be addressed at committee. However, it is important that we support this piece of legislation, that we send it to committee so we can have a fulsome debate on how to move Canada's tourism industry forward and also how we could unite this country around the majesty and the beauty of her geography.

• (1955)

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon (Miramichi, CPC): Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to speak about Bill C-463, which is sponsored by the MP for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel. Before I get into the details of the bill, I would like to begin today by taking a few moments to speak about the important contributions tourism makes to our economy in every region of our great country.

Each year, millions of visitors from around the world and from across Canada travel our great country to discover its many natural and man-made wonders. The industry that serves those people is an important part of our economy. Indeed, thousands of Canadians rely on tourism for their jobs and livelihoods.

While large hotel chains, airlines and tour operators are important, about 98% of Canada's tourism sector consists of small and medium-sized businesses, such as lodges, wineries and spas. As such, it is mostly made up of thousands of private sectors and not-for-profit

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organizations and associations, as well as departments and agencies at all three levels of government.

In 2011, tourism accounted for approximately 2%, or \$31.1 billion, of Canada's gross domestic product, some \$78.7 billion in revenues, over 600,000 direct jobs and 3.5% of total employment in Canada. Tourism-related businesses often work with destination marketing organizations, which exist at the municipal, regional, provincial and national levels. These organizations promote development and market Canada's various tourism destinations and experiences.

Through various agencies, the three levels of government directly run many of Canada's most important tourism attractions, including parks, museums, sports stadiums and convention centres. Governments also establish policy and legislative frameworks and administrative practices that support and affect how our tourism businesses operate.

The diversified nature of the tourism sector makes it critical that all partners find ways to collaborate to build world-class destinations that offer first-class services and uniquely Canadian experiences. In the fall of 2011, after consulting with the men and women who help to make Canada such a great place to visit, it became very clear that a new federal tourism strategy was needed to help position Canada's tourism sector for long-term growth and global competitiveness.

The strategy focused on four priorities. The first was to increase awareness of Canada as a premier tourist destination. Second was to facilitate the ease of access and movement for travellers. Third is encouraging product development and investments in Canadian tourism assets and products. Fourth is fostering an adequate supply of skills and labour to enhance visitor experiences through quality service and great hospitality.

Canada's tourism industry has expressed support for the four priority areas and recent federal actions to foster tourism, including investments in tourism, infrastructure and marketing, through Canada's economic action plan and the signing of an approved destination status agreement with China.

In 2008 to 2009, during the global economic crisis, we invested more than \$530 million in direct support for the tourism sector. This included more than \$360 million in product development and tourism infrastructure, such as convention centres, and \$113 million in tourism marketing. An additional \$782 million was spent, largely on artistic, cultural and sports-related activities that have an indirect impact on tourism. We also made significant infrastructure investments in roads and bridges in support of this industry.

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• (2000)

In addition to this ongoing support, Canada's economic action plan provided economic stimulus to the visitor economy through direct funding from our key tourism events, national parks, cruise infrastructure and marketing. Under the plan, we also invested billions of dollars in transportation and community infrastructure and in economic development that will provide enduring benefits to the sector. These actions supported the tourism industry through the economic downturn, and the sector continues to be resilient in the face of today's frequently volatile environment.

Given these strengths, we do not believe the proposed amendments to the Income Tax Act would be necessary. Although Bill C-463 would be intended to encourage Canadians to discover Canada by recognizing the costs of travel involving the crossing of at least three provincial boundaries, it is unclear whether and to what extent the proposal would motivate individuals to travel more, or to change their travel plans to take advantage of the tax deduction. Moreover, the proposal would have a number of deficiencies and would raise a number of equity and fairness concerns. In particular, it would recognize only the costs of tickets for travelling by bus, train or air. Other travel expenses, such as lodging, which may be significant for travel outside an individual's home province, may well present a deterrent for people who might otherwise take advantage of the proposed deduction. This deficiency would likely create pressure to extend tax relief to travel expenses that are not eligible under this proposal. Such extended tax relief would come at a significant fiscal cost. The deduction would provide significant benefits to those who would have incurred eligible travel expenses in any case. As such, it would represent a windfall gain to these individuals without increasing tourism.

The proposed deduction would apply only for airplane, train or bus transportation. It would not apply to travel by other modes of transportation, such as motor vehicle or boat, which may favour certain urban centres or regions over others. The bill would also stipulate that the percentage that could be deducted from income would vary, depending on the mode of transportation: 100% for travel by bus; 75% for travel by train; and 40% for travel by airplane. There is no policy rationale for why particular modes of transportation should be provided different tax treatment. Those travelling by air or train would view the measure as unfair, and rightly so.

In addition, the proposed measure would likely provide more tax relief to higher-income individuals, for two reasons. First, the deduction would apply to discretionary travel expenses that are typically incurred by higher-income individuals. Second, the value of the proposed deduction would be greater for individuals who are in higher personal income tax brackets.

To conclude, the bill would be inconsistent with existing tax policy, which generally does not allow taxpayers to deduct personal expenses and could entail significant costs. Indeed, implementing this deduction could cost about \$215 million annually in foregone federal revenue, starting in 2017. It would also entail a cost for the provinces that use the federal definition of "taxable income", in other words, all provinces except Quebec. It is unclear to what degree the proposal would induce individuals to travel more or to change their travel plans. For all these reasons, and others, my colleagues will

mention as this debate progresses that our government opposes Bill C-463.

• (2005)

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Resuming debate.

This evening, the hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue will have five minutes.

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that is too bad because I have a lot to say.

Bill C-463 seeks to amend the Income Tax Act to give taxpayers a deduction for the expense of purchasing tickets for themselves and their children for leisure travel by airplane, train or bus if the travel involves crossing at least three different provinces. We understand that the hon. member is trying to encourage Canadians to travel within Canada and to discover other regions. This intention to promote travel within Canada and to have people discover other provinces that they might not otherwise is good.

However, is this the right solution? Absolutely not. I would say this is a flop. First, this bill targets people who already travel within Canada or who are likely to do so. For many Canadian families who are already struggling to make ends meet, this measure will not make much of a difference. In my riding, families tell me they would like to come see me in Ottawa, but they do not have the money to get here.

In this bill, they are being asked to travel through three different provinces. That makes absolutely no sense. Families who are struggling financially are not going to discover Canada. This measure does not help them one bit because it is a non-refundable tax credit. In order to benefit from it, one has to pay taxes. Families with a very low incomes will never be entitled to this credit, so this is of no use to them.

It is very clear that only well-off families would benefit from this bill. If you are poor, you will not travel across Canada, but if you are rich and you can afford it, the government will help you visit Canada. This makes absolutely no sense to me and it is not the right approach to presenting a bill.

Let me focus for a minute on people living in Quebec and Ontario. The bill talks about crossing three borders, which means going to four different provinces. We estimated the distances involved using Google maps. I used as an example someone living in my riding, in the city of Rouyn-Noranda near the Ontario border. In order to qualify for the tax credit, that person would have to travel at least 2,300 km. However, someone living in B.C. or Alberta would only need to travel 1,500 km. The province of origin creates inequalities.

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Things get even worse for people from Whitehorse, Yellowknife and Nunavut: since they are travelling south, crossing three borders becomes a near-impossible feat. The distances involved are truly vast. Obviously, it does not make much sense to base a tax credit on a requirement to cross three borders.

One only has to look at a map of Canada to see that the three-border rule is illogical, given the sheer size of our country and the way it is divided, with huge territories and smaller provinces. Logic alone shows that the bill would be very difficult to implement, and that it would create inequality between provinces.

Second, it is true that travelling can be a hassle. It is important to note that Canada's domestic transportation networks are not ideal. Transportation services are lacking and often costly for Canadian families, and even for tourists. For example, the Northlander, which recently shut down, serviced northern Ontario communities as well as communities adjoining my riding. Obviously, rail service is a provincial responsibility; nevertheless, there used to be a train where now there is none.

Often, passengers who take the bus are looking to head in a specific direction. That said, the fact that there are no buses that run from one end of Ontario to the other makes no environmental sense. One has to get to Montreal first and then cross Ontario before heading north. The bus routes make no sense. What is more, the tax credit does not apply to cars. People have to make a few detours in order to qualify for the tax credit. That makes absolutely no sense. We are penalizing those who live in remote places where trains and buses are scarce. We are forcing them to make a bunch of detours in order to qualify for the tax credit.

● (2010)

This penalizes people who live close to a transit line, in areas regularly serviced by public transit.

[*English*]

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

Pursuant to Standing Order 37, the House will now proceed to the consideration of Motion No. 412 under private members' business.

* * *

● (2015)

HYDROELECTRIC PROJECT

The House resumed from January 31 consideration of the motion, and of the amendment.

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity today to speak to Motion No. 412 on the federal loan guarantee for the Lower Churchill hydroelectric project. The intent of this motion is to express support for using the federal government's sovereign credit rating to lower the financing costs for regionally significant natural resource development projects. In this particular case, it is addressing the financing of the Lower Churchill hydroelectric projects in Labrador and in the maritime provinces.

Last fall, the federal government and the Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia governments reached agreement on the terms and conditions for this federal loan guarantee. The first thing I would like to say is that given that this agreement has been reached, I am not so sure it is so important for the House to be considering this motion. It feels a little too much like a pat on the back for the government of the day. In my opinion, it is a lost opportunity to make good use of the time in the House not only for the good of northern Ontario but for all of Canada.

I am a little surprised that if the government wished to discuss this issue, no Conservative members from Atlantic Canada sponsored this motion. A member from northern Ontario had to use a precious northern Ontario spot for private members' business to address an Atlantic Canada issue. Nevertheless, the motion is what it is.

Let me say that we in the Liberal Party support the principle of federal loan guarantees for regional resource development projects, assuming that due consideration has been given to the concerns of aboriginal peoples, environmental concerns, and the economic impact and viability of the projects. Therefore, we will be supporting this motion.

[*Translation*]

The Liberal Party is in favour of loan guarantees for such projects and other provincial resource development projects. That is why we support the motion. I feel the need to emphasize, however, that the Conservative government needs to let the other provinces and territories know whether or not it intends to extend similar guarantees for their large-scale clean energy projects and whether or not it intends to establish a national framework to that end.

[*English*]

There are other possible projects in the region, in fact, for which we might consider loan guarantees, such as bringing power from Quebec into Atlantic Canada or bringing power to Prince Edward Island, where electricity rates are very high. These are the other sorts of natural resource projects, which are important in a regional sense, that we should be thinking about in the future for federal loan guarantees. I would hope the government would consider setting up a framework, something bigger than just a loan guarantee for one project, such as the one we are considering today.

While we support the motion because we support its intent, we do not agree with some of the premises of the motion. We wish to point out that the reality of the situation is not as sunny as the motion would have Canadians believe. I believe that the less spin we have, especially here in Ottawa, and the more reality, the better it is for Canada.

I would like to expand on that point. We agree that electricity generation from these hydroelectric projects will displace the old oil-burning Holyrood thermal generating station. We understand that jobs will be created in the construction of this project and that a stable electricity supply will be available for industry and for export.

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• (2020)

However, the reality is not as sunny as the motion implies, because for one, electricity rates will go up. Ratepayers in Newfoundland and Nova Scotia will be on the hook for the cost of these projects and for possible cost overruns. The federal government is not on the hook for cost overruns; ratepayers are. Yes, jobs will be created by the project, but there will also be a drag on the economy from higher electricity costs. The picture is only partly sunny.

The Labrador Inuit and the Labrador Métis feel that they have been left out and were not properly consulted. They feel left out of the benefits of the project. The Innu nations support the project and have signed agreements. Again, the situation is really only partly sunny.

To reiterate, it is important to bring out the complexities of any issue so that we talk more about reality in the House and less about spin. Environmental groups have launched a court challenge over the Lower Churchill project. Large-scale hydroelectric generation involves flooding, and that means damage to a watershed and damage to habitat. The Red Wine caribou herd is affected. There is also potential mercury poisoning from the release of naturally occurring mercury when flooding occurs.

Hydroelectric resources, if developed sustainably, environmentally, economically and socially, can be a great resource. In this case, it would be to the benefit of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

The Liberals support the federal loan guarantee for the Lower Churchill falls hydroelectric project. Liberals support the principle of loan guarantees, assuming that due consideration has been given to the concerns of aboriginal peoples, to environmental concerns and to the overall economic impact and viability of the project.

However, large projects can affect entire regions, as this one does. We know that benefits can be uneven. There is some controversy. Not everybody is in agreement. We have to acknowledge that, even as we express our support for the loan guarantee. Provinces can have disputes.

Canada, with its great geographic diversity, could benefit from the government thinking a lot larger than just one project. Canada would benefit if its federal and provincial governments thought about a pan-Canadian energy strategy. This set of hydroelectric projects really illustrates how a lot of different provinces—Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, Quebec and so on—are affected by a single project. In this sense, it is too bad this motion addresses only the Lower Churchill hydroelectric project.

We support the motion, but this is an opportunity we could have taken to discuss a much grander vision to link the energy and economic futures of the different provinces and the diverse regions of Canada as we work together toward a shared future of prosperity and sustainability. I would ask that the government think about this and perhaps have a bigger and longer-term vision for the country's economic future and the future of using its natural resources for the most benefit for all of its people, provinces and diverse regions.

I wish to conclude simply by saying that I support the motion. I hope that it will lead to a much larger discussion.

Mr. Mike Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is great to have the opportunity to speak to the motion, M-412, brought by my colleague from Nipissing—Timiskaming.

We have a process in the House of Commons called an order of precedence. The last speaker talked about why someone from Atlantic Canada was not bringing this to the table. I would love to have brought this to the table, but I am number 231 on the order of precedence. I doubt in this four-year time arising that I will ever get a chance to bring a private member's bill to debate in the House.

I appreciate the member bringing forward this motion because it is important to Atlantic Canada and important to all of Canada, when we talk about the economy and the jobs that it would create. There is no question in my mind that this is a key project for Atlantic Canada. It is a key project when it comes to clean, renewable energy. That is why the governments of Canada, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Nova Scotia announced in 2012 that we had reached an agreement on the terms for the federal loan guarantee.

As the Prime Minister said, the agreement represents a promise made and a promise kept. That is exactly what that is, and I am proud that we kept our word to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador that we would do this.

Last summer, we had a chance to be in Labrador for our Atlantic caucus meetings, and it was tremendous to fly over the site where the development will take place. What was even more important and interesting was that, as we flew over the town, we watched the development of the housing. What is going on in Labrador is incredible, not only with this project but the tremendous development and mining potential and export business for Newfoundland. Newfoundland and Labrador is booming.

The motion is important because there are four key elements. First, it is an important part of a clean energy agenda. It is an economically viable project that would create thousands of jobs and economic growth. It would be significant to the Atlantic region, which would benefit from a stable and sustainable electricity source for decades to come.

I will talk a little bit about that because my colleague across the way mentioned the pricing. This project would provide stable pricing, because when we look at the alternatives, such as the oil station at Holyrood, the price will only go up. It is also environmentally friendly with substantial greenhouse gas emission reductions.

The first point I will deal with is the economic benefit. This project would create 8,600 person-years of direct employment. Almost 3,000 people would be working on the project at peak employment times, and it would have a Canada-wide employment of 47,800 person-years. That is Canada-wide employment, and Canada-wide income to business and labour would be \$3.5 billion on this project.

Private Members' Business

This is continuing a tradition of significant projects. We only have to look at the Churchill Falls project, which started in 1967. At the time it was the largest civil engineering project ever undertaken in North America, with 300 metres underground. I do not know if any of my colleagues in the House have been to Churchill Falls, but it is impressive. It is impressive to go down 300 metres underground. People with heart devices are not allowed to go down there because of all the generators. Their heart devices would shut off.

The system that they have to feed the power is just tremendous. We visited the project a few years ago with the natural resources committee and I was duly impressed. At the time it was the third largest hydro station in terms of capacity in North America, almost 5,400 megawatts.

This project is another great development for Newfoundland and Labrador. The \$6.2-billion project that we are talking about involves the development of the Lower Churchill. It involves the lines to connect to the mainland and, as well, the line to connect to Nova Scotia.

● (2025)

This maritime link that is going to bring this power into Nova Scotia is going to be important in Nova Scotia's long-term plans to lower their greenhouse gases because, as we know, in Atlantic Canada there is a tremendous reliance on fossil fuel.

New Brunswick has coal-fired power. I know my friend from Nova Scotia is in the House here today, and he knows the tremendous reliance in Nova Scotia on coal-fired power. This represents a tremendous opportunity in terms of lowering greenhouse gas emissions.

I will just go to Holyrood for a minute. This is going to allow Newfoundland to retire the Holyrood station. It burns somewhere in the order of 6,000 barrels a day for every unit at the Holyrood station. It goes through 250,000 litres a minute of seawater, and 90,000 litres per day of fresh water.

Let us just imagine 90,000 litres a day of fresh water. I know all my colleagues in the House appreciate the water resource that we have. Using the water resource to generate electricity as opposed to using it for cooling and everything else that we need it for is a tremendous benefit to the region and to the environment. We cannot talk just about emissions on this issue.

As well, retiring the Holyrood station will make the Newfoundland system 98% carbon free, eliminating 96 million tons of emissions. These are great stats, great metrics on a project that is going to mean a lot to Newfoundland and Labrador and also to Nova Scotia.

What this does is start the development. It is the first station, 824 megawatts. Potentially, the next one could be 2,500 megawatts. When we look at these benefits and reflect on the recent budget of this past week, the thing we think about is the number of jobs that are going to be created and the specific jobs that will be created in trades.

The other great thing about this what we will call a bit of a social aspect. The folks who are in Fort McMurray realize that there is a

tremendous number of Newfoundland and Labradorians who are actually in Fort McMurray now.

An hon. member: The biggest city in Newfoundland.

Mr. Mike Allen: It's the biggest city in Newfoundland, exactly. With that in mind, projects like this allow an opportunity for our folks to come back. That is a tremendous opportunity for alleviating some of the strain on families and the challenges that the strain presents.

I have always said that folks are not going to come back for one or two years, but if there is a project that is going to take five or six years to build, and then hundreds of jobs are available in each of these stations over 30, 40 or 50 years, that represents long-term, stable employment in the region and a great opportunity for folks to actually come back to the area.

As I was indicating before, with the budget bringing in implementation to develop the skilled trades that are going to be so needed for all these different projects, this is a tremendous opportunity and lays the groundwork for some of the key work that is going to have to be done in the years to come.

I want to conclude by saying that Motion No. 412 clearly sets out the many benefits of this Lower Churchill hydro development. I prefer to look at this as the glass being half full. It not only offers tremendous opportunities to the many folks who are out west, but it also offers tremendous opportunities to the untapped potential of our first nations communities to participate in this in terms of employment and working with the governments to actually benefit the first nation communities.

With projects like the Lower Churchill and other hydro developments in Manitoba, Quebec, and British Columbia, we are a strong leader in the efforts worldwide to expand the use of hydro power as a way to reduce global greenhouse emissions. In fact, as members would know, Canada is the third-largest producer of hydro power.

We have an opportunity here to benefit the Atlantic region. We have an opportunity for all this power potentially being developed and going all through New Brunswick as a corridor, right down into the U.S., which is actually now starving for renewable power.

This is a tremendous motion for this House to get behind, because it helps the whole region. It helps Canada. I really want to thank the member for Nipissing—Timiskaming for bringing this forward to the House. It was a great job. I encourage all members to support it.

● (2030)

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as the member before me, I too am pleased to speak on the motion. I thank the member for Nipissing—Timiskaming for bringing this motion forward. The federal guarantee is important for the Atlantic region and, frankly, for Canada.

I will make a couple of points and then focus on the benefits for Nova Scotia, the province I am from.

Private Members' Business

First, we support the federal government loan guarantee for the Lower Churchill project and we have since the 2006 election. Our leader at the time, in 2011, Jack Layton, wrote to the governments of Newfoundland and Nova Scotia indicating he would do what he could to work with the federal government, whomever that would be at the end of the 2011 election, in order to make sure this loan guarantee went forward.

Second, the project offers extensive environmental benefits. We believe that the federal government must play a role in facilitating the transition in a way that is fair to all provinces, and I will talk a bit more about that as it relates to Nova Scotia.

The third and final message is that New Democrats believe the federal government should be taking a leadership role in supporting renewable energy and interprovincial co-operation across the board. We would like to see the federal government be more assertive and take seriously its constitutional role in developing equity and support across this country. We believe it could be doing much more, and this is an example of a type of project. Some would suggest this is a nation-building project that would benefit the Atlantic region and this is the kind of thing that should be going forward across the country.

Nova Scotians have lived for decades now with a dependence on either coal or bunker C, and they have seen world market prices continue to go through the roof. At the same time, there is environmental damage that is caused as a result of burning coal, which is surely known by all members here. The economic damage, let alone the environmental and health damage of burning coal, is something we know we have to do something about. The Province of Nova Scotia, along with the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, has reached an agreement which goes a considerable distance to accomplishing this.

Back in April 2010, the Government of Nova Scotia released the renewable electricity plan. In addition to the commitment of having renewables provide 25% of all electricity by 2015, the plan specified a new goal of 40% renewable electricity by 2020.

At that time, the government of the day saw three ways to do that: one was with more intermittent sources, such as wind, complemented by natural gas; two was hydroelectric energy from Lower Churchill; and three was more clean energy imported by neighbouring provinces.

A number of months later, the Province of Nova Scotia signed an agreement, along with Emera Energy and Alcor Energy, and with the involvement of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. In return for bearing 20% of the cost of building the hydro facility and associated transmission facilities between Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia ratepayers would receive 20% of the energy from Muskrat Falls for 35 years. This would be supplemented by what they referred to as a "supplemental block", which would provide another proportion of energy for the first five years of the agreement.

● (2035)

In addition to the base and supplemental blocks, Nova Scotia Power would be able to purchase additional hydroelectric energy from Alcor at market rates.

It is important to recognize not only is this meant to replace or greatly lessen the reliance on hydrocarbon-producing coal-burning plants, but it would also establish a dependable price that Nova Scotians have not seen for a period of 35 years. I just heard Liberal Party representatives say that ratepayers are going to be paying the cost, but ratepayers are paying the cost right now of a dependency on coal and bunker C. They are paying it right up the nose and they are paying it every day on their bills.

This was a courageous decision by the government of Nova Scotia, along with the government of Newfoundland and Labrador, to begin to actually do something about establishing some stability in rates for ratepayers, while at the same time to deal, and again in a courageous fashion, with environmental and health concerns by the burning and production carbon.

There continues to be naysayers in the province of Nova Scotia and across the country. This deal has been supported by the federal government. It was the right decision to make for not only taxpayers in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador but for all Canadians.

Provinces like Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia need to make strides to end their dependence on coal-burning power plants. The provinces do not seem to recognize the fact that the world has a serious climate change problem and Canada has to do its part. One way for Canada to do its part is to deal with how it gets its electricity. For Canada's economy, for the economy of the Atlantic region, it just simply makes sense.

Right now Nova Scotia is at the end of the power grid, or at the end of the line. We can only receive power from one end, and there have been problems in negotiating prices both on the world market and with our neighbours because of that dependence. Now we are going to be in the middle of the loop, between Newfoundland and Labrador, between Muskrat Falls and Quebec. We are going to ensure that we negotiate the best deal for Nova Scotia ratepayers. We are going to continue to deal with our neighbours in Atlantic Canada. We are going to continue to deal with Quebec. Nova Scotia buys power from Hydro-Québec and it will continue to do that. It is another source within a range of sources.

However, this guarantee allows us to ultimately stand up for ourselves, to develop a source of power generation in Atlantic Canada that benefits Atlantic Canadians. It allows us to stand on our own two feet, to continue to develop our economies and contribute to the country as Canadians would expect us to do.

I want to again thank the member opposite for bringing this important motion forward.

● (2040)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is pleasure to rise in the House to speak to this motion. Just like my colleague from Kingston and the Islands, I have to wonder why we absolutely had to debate this motion now, given that the government has already announced its decision to extend a loan guarantee to the Muskrat Falls project in Newfoundland and Labrador. I have to wonder about that.

Private Members' Business

Our position on this issue has been known for a long time. We stated it during the campaign. Our leader at the time, Jack Layton, publicly voiced our support for loan guarantees, under certain conditions, one of which being that such guarantees be extended equally to all provinces for the purpose of promoting renewable energy.

I would like to talk about what the Newfoundland and Labrador agreement is not. The agreement is not a loan from the federal government. The agreement is not a subsidy from the federal government for Newfoundland and Labrador. The agreement is not funding for the project. It is a loan guarantee. Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia, which is a partner in the agreement, will finance the hydroelectric project. The federal government will simply provide a loan guarantee, which is similar to what happens when we apply to a bank for a loan and ask another party to provide a guarantee for that loan. That is all that will result from the federal government's announcement.

We have to be clear that the federal government is not committing any funds. Taxpayers' money will not go to this project unless—and this is not very likely—the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador or Nalcor Energy, a crown corporation and owner of the Newfoundland public electricity company, goes bankrupt. There is virtually no likelihood of that happening. In that sense, there is virtually no risk to the federal government.

The Muskrat Falls project is a hydroelectric project on the Lower Churchill River. The project will generate an estimated 824 MW of electricity. It is not a huge project compared to some in Quebec, such as the mega projects we have become accustomed to seeing with Hydro-Québec. This is the first phase of the project, and it will be followed by phase 2 on Gull Island. The two projects combined will generate 3,074 MW of electricity.

Once again, it is an important project that will help meet the needs of the Atlantic provinces, even though it is not anywhere near the size of the projects we are used to seeing from Hydro-Québec. We consider this to be an important project for Newfoundland and Labrador and for Nova Scotia, the two provinces party to the agreement.

I should note that energy is presently being produced in Labrador. This will be the first time that energy produced in Labrador is transmitted to the island of Newfoundland, which presently receives no hydroelectricity from outside the island. It is important that we understand this in order to realize the impact that the project could have on the Atlantic provinces, especially Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia.

The project would create a maritime link to the island of Newfoundland and then a maritime link between the island of Newfoundland and Nova Scotia. At that point, if Nova Scotia thinks it is necessary, it would have the opportunity to enter into an agreement with New Brunswick, as well as opportunities for export to the United States.

However, we must be careful. Not all the electricity that is produced at Muskrat Falls or eventually at Gull Island will go to the United States. Right now, under the existing agreement, 60% of the electricity produced at Muskrat Falls and Gull Island will be used by

either Newfoundland or Nova Scotia. That is a minimum because the percentage will increase over time since there will be greater domestic demand. This will mean that there will be less electricity available for export, possibly to the United States. One thing is certain: by virtue of the agreement, Nova Scotia will always have 20% of the hydroelectric production.

What reasons are there to support this project other than the fact that it is beneficial for Newfoundland and Nova Scotia? There are also environmental reasons. This project will make it possible to decrease dependence, particularly Nova Scotia's dependence, on coal-fired plants, which emit a lot of greenhouse gases. This will make it possible to eliminate or greatly reduce the production of four coal-fired plants in Nova Scotia.

● (2045)

I am talking about the plants in Lingan, Point Aconi, Point Tupper and Trenton. There is also a plant in Tufts Cove that generates electricity using oil and natural gas. The project would also make it possible to eliminate the Holyrood oil-burning power plant in Newfoundland. This project therefore has many environmental benefits.

Once these plants have closed, it is estimated that the project will decrease these provinces' greenhouse gas emissions by 16 megatonnes a year. By way of comparison, that is equivalent to 3.2 million cars on the road.

Most of the parties in the House are in favour of reducing greenhouse gases in order to mitigate the effects of climate change, which are already being felt. We have to put words into action. We have talked a great deal about the need to eliminate greenhouse gases, but now we need to support measures that go in that direction. Hydroelectric plants go in that direction, particularly the one in Muskrat Falls, which is the subject of the hon. member's motion. That is why we will support this motion.

I would now like to talk about the misinformation surrounding this project. The federal government is interfering in a provincial jurisdiction. I do not see any interference in the Muskrat Falls project or in the loan guarantee that the government is giving Newfoundland for that project. Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia will always own these projects. Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia will manage the production and transmission of hydroelectric power. The federal government has no control over the project itself or how it is managed. All it is doing is offering a loan guarantee.

I am truly surprised to hear this argument. I am also surprised to hear that it is not necessarily the best project available and that the government should not give the loan guarantee. There are still debates about this in Nova Scotia and in Newfoundland and Labrador. Some people think that the loan guarantee should not be given.

Private Members' Business

The decision has been made. The two provinces conducted environmental studies and studies to find better alternatives to the proposed measures, to the construction of Muskrat Falls and the power transmission. The provinces determined that it was the project that best met their needs and their objectives. Nova Scotia has significant targets in terms of reducing greenhouse gases. It is not up to the federal government to decide what project is the best for the provinces. The work has already been done.

The second element directly affects Quebec, and members from Quebec talk about it often. I am talking about competition or the argument that Hydro-Québec would have competition. As I said, Hydro-Québec has done a great job and truly built the Quebec we have today. Every Quebecker is grateful for the role that Hydro-Québec played in the province's economic development. There will be no competition, because Hydro-Québec has no connection to Newfoundland. There will be no competition because Quebec does not do business with Nova Scotia. There will be no competition—or there will be very little—with regard to exporting electricity, because the project will export no more than 300 megawatts of electricity from Muskrat Falls to the United States. Hydro-Québec exports 27,000 megawatts a year. Competition cannot be the only reason to oppose this bill, which will have a positive impact on the environment.

Jack Layton supported this project. The NDP included it in its 2011 election platform, and we did not shy away from that. For once, we are proudly supporting a Conservative government decision, namely a loan guarantee for a project that will clearly be managed by Newfoundland and Labrador, in partnership with Nova Scotia.

I regret not having the opportunity to respond to my colleagues' questions. I know that that is not the tradition for private members' bills, but I was pleased to speak to this very important issue.

• (2050)

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to the motion moved by the hon. member for Nipissing—Timiskaming. My NDP colleagues and I support this motion.

The environment is a cause that is important to me. I believe it is important to ensure that families and children in our country can live in a healthy and sustainable environment.

Before being elected to the House, I was involved in environmental causes in a number of capacities. I was on the board of directors of the Conseil du bassin versant de Vaudreuil—Soulanges. I also worked as an environmental researcher and as a consultant in ecological development.

I am taking the time to emphasize my commitment to the environment because I think it is important to ensure that the federal government assumes its responsibility to protect the environment by actively encouraging the development of clean energy and a green economy.

By committing to invest in green energy development, the federal government would be contributing to the fight against climate change, while stimulating the economy and cutting energy costs for

Canadian families. That is exactly what the NDP wants for Canada. It wants the federal government to make significant investments in green energy development across Canada. We are talking about the future of our environment and our economy.

We need to develop the green energy sector. I think it is particularly important to focus on the state of this sector and the government's investments in it.

The situation is not very impressive. According to a report published by Pew Charitable Trusts, an American non-profit, non-governmental organization, green energy accounted for only 4.3% of Canada's energy production capacity in 2009. Canada ranked 11th, followed by Indonesia, China, the United States and Mexico. We are light years behind countries like Germany and Spain, whose green energy production capacity is close to 30% of their overall energy capacity.

According to another Pew report, the situation is similar for investments in green energy. Canada ranked 11th among G20 countries in 2011. While China and the United States did not have very good records with respect to their capacity to produce clean energy in 2009, these two countries were leading the pack with their investments in developing green energy in 2011.

From 2009 to 2011, the United States almost doubled its overall green energy production capacity from 53.6 gigawatts to 93 gigawatts, and China nearly tripled its capacity from 52.5 gigawatts to 133 gigawatts. Canada has only increased its green energy production capacity by 2 gigawatts over the same period. In short, not only are we lagging behind, but we are being overtaken.

It is not just the countries at the back of the pack that are overtaking us when it comes to green energy investment in recent years. Germany, Spain, India, the United Kingdom and Brazil all invested more than Canada in 2011. All these countries already had a green energy production capacity higher than Canada's.

Now is not the time for talk, but rather for action. The government must do more than move motions, as commendable as they may be. It must commit to getting Canada back into the global green energy race.

• (2055)

[English]

Getting back into the green energy race is not a matter of national pride or of political games; it is a matter of ensuring our energy security, of protecting our environment and of stimulating the economic growth of Canada. As stated in a Pembina Institute report published a few months ago, the current government's failure to provide leadership in the green energy sector is undermining this country's competitiveness on the world market.

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Too often, the NDP is wrongfully accused by the Conservatives of being against job creation or being against developing our economy. I think the case of the green energy sector shows exactly the opposite. It shows that we at the NDP understand how the economy works. We understand how to create economic growth. We understand that Canadians want good sustainable jobs. We know that part of the solution is to invest in the green energy sector to give our clean technology companies the support that they need. We also understand that if the government does not act now, no one will, and Canada will keep falling behind.

Although my party and I support the motion, I think that it is slightly ironic for the Conservative government to pat itself on the back in matters of clean energy, while only last year it cancelled the \$400 million ecoEnergy retrofit program ahead of schedule and did not renew funding for Sustainable Development Technology Canada. Even in this budget, it only allocated \$1 million to SDTC this year. All the funding for that program is years down the line, when the Conservatives might not even be in power.

I do not wish to sound too cynical about the Conservative motion, but I think that it is not an exaggeration to state that the current Conservative government and its Liberal predecessors have overlooked the importance of a green transition for this country's economy and environment.

Nonetheless, I will support the motion. I will support the motion because I think that Canada needs to invest in and develop our clean and renewable energy sector. While other G20 countries are going ahead with massive investments, we are falling behind. Countries such as China and the United States, which are not role models in matters of clean energy, are passing us in terms of stimulus funding for clean energy. We need to catch up and become leaders instead of laggards.

Most of all, I hope the government will walk the walk in matters of clean energy. I hope that the Canadian government will develop a clear and effective strategy of investment in clean energy. I hope that the Conservative government decision to agree to a loan guarantee on the lower Churchill hydroelectric project is more than just a political manoeuvre, because developing a vibrant clean energy sector in Canada is no political game. Developing clean energy would grow the Canadian economy and create good, lasting jobs.

To conclude, I hope that my colleagues on the other side of the House do understand, as the NDP does, that Canada can become a global leader in renewable energy and that it is the role of the government to develop renewable energy to create economic growth and jobs, while building a sustainable economy that decreases our carbon footprint for generations to come.

• (2100)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Resuming debate with his five-minute right of reply, the hon. member for Nipissing—Timiskaming.

Mr. Jay Aspin (Nipissing—Timiskaming, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise as the sponsor of Motion No. 412 and I am pleased with the consensus that has arrived.

I will just give a little background. I was involved in alternative energy for about 10 years before being elected as a parliamentarian. I

am currently chair of the cleantech caucus. I have always had a huge interest in renewable energy and cleantech projects. That is what motivated me to get involved in the motion.

I am particularly proud of our government assisting in this initiative. Obviously, this would create jobs, improve our economy and ensure long-term prosperity. It would clean up the environment with one of the largest renewable energy projects in Canada's history. It would eliminate fossil fuel plants in Newfoundland and Nova Scotia. Clearly, it would save some 4.5 million tonnes of GHG.

I would be remiss if I did not extend my appreciation to the former, and I would hope soon-to-be future, member for Labrador who has been of tremendous help to me in this endeavour and of valuable assistance with this project. I thank him for his hard work in making this project a reality and look forward to when he can return and offer even more of the kind of leadership he has given his constituents over the last two years. No doubt, his efforts have made, and will make, a distinct difference to the people of Atlantic Canada and the people of Labrador.

With this future in mind and with the many benefits the project would bring to Canadians, I strongly support private member's Motion No. 412 and our government's commitment to these projects. I look forward to the day when the ribbon is cut at the Muskrat Falls hydro power generating station and I look forward to all members of the House supporting Motion No. 412.

• (2105)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The time provided for debate has expired. The question is on the amendment. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): All those in favour of the amendment will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, April 17, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

*Adjournment Proceedings**[English]*

REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative's economic plan has failed many Canadians. It has especially failed northwestern Ontario and will continue to fail our region under the 2013 budget. They have already handed us the largest trade deficit in Canadian history, the largest budget deficit in Canadian history and stalled unemployment. Now the Communist Chinese are handed control of our key resources, science is sabotaged and environmental controls are scrapped. It is a plan where ideology kills evidence and science.

The Conservatives have spent tens of millions of tax dollars advertising the plan to the very taxpayers who pay for the ads. However, the ads do not mention the cuts to critical services across Canada, particularly in northwestern Ontario. They are cuts like closing the Thunder Bay citizenship and immigration office, and the upcoming closure of the Thunder Bay Marine Communication and Traffic Services Centre after 105 years of life-saving service. Now calls will be routed over 1,000 kms away, to a call centre in southern Ontario.

The Thunder Bay Veterans Affairs Canada office is also closing. It served RCMP officers, 500 senior veterans and 600 younger veterans. Including family members, the Thunder Bay office has served about 3,000 people, all the way from the Manitoba border to past Sault Ste. Marie. A toll-free number, or referring veterans to a website, is not the service that those who have served our country deserve.

There have been 25 positions that were lost at Human Resources and Skills Development Canada in Thunder Bay, which will further devastate EI recipients. The Canada Revenue Agency in Thunder Bay has closed its service counter. The Department of Fisheries and Oceans has lost fisheries biologists, which will impact the protection of fish and their habitat. This is on top of the closure of the Experimental Lakes Area. Thunder Bay is losing 75 people at the Canadian Grain Commission. Having no more research and no more inward inspections will damage Canada's reputation.

Service Canada in my riding has seen over 20 jobs lost, impacting front-line service delivery to constituents. In total, over 130 people have been axed so far in Thunder Bay, and that number will soon grow to over 300 this year.

Let us turn to the problems of the budget that was tabled just a few days ago. There are a lot. There is a tax hike on credit unions. There are no substantial new tax reductions for small business, just a job-killing hike in payroll taxes, EI premiums. By contrast, the United Kingdom just reduced those to zero for small businesses, to stimulate jobs.

There is nothing in the budget to end the \$1.3 billion in taxpayer subsidies for the greedy and profitable oil and gas sector and still no price on carbon. There are no new doctors and nurses in rural areas. The Conservatives are recycling old money for youth unemployment, when 13% of youth under 29 years of age are unemployed. There are no rules on exorbitant bank and credit card charges on consumers and small businesses, just voluntary codes. There is nothing to deal with the pensions crisis, just more talk. There is

nothing but consultations on first nations education, when aboriginal students are funded at only half the level as other students in Ontario.

No budget is all bad or good; there are things in this one that I can support. However, for a change, will the Conservatives be open to considering some amendments to improve the budget this time?

● (2110)

Ms. Candice Bergen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am glad for this opportunity to address the member's question and to once again highlight the fine work our Conservative government has done and continues to do in northern Ontario.

We recognize the importance of having the tools in place to address the economic development needs of local communities and businesses. We are focused on investing in initiatives that build on regional strengths and capitalize on opportunities to create jobs, growth and long-term prosperity.

I am proud to report that our Conservative government, through FedNor, has invested more than \$346 million toward more than 1,500 projects in northern Ontario, and we do not have to look very far to see the results of our investments.

In the city of Elliot Lake, the impact of the Algo Centre Mall collapse last year was deeply felt by the entire community, including local businesses. It forced the relocation of 30 businesses and affected more than 195 jobs. The need for infrastructure investment in this community was real and urgent. I am very proud of our government's response.

With an investment of \$1 million, we helped the community to prepare and service a seven-acre parcel of land that will be the site of a new 80,000-square-foot retail centre. This investment, expected to attract approximately \$10 million in additional private sector funding to the region, makes good economic sense. It also serves as one example to highlight our government's ongoing commitment to help communities build the infrastructure they need to grow their economy and create jobs.

Our Conservative government is committed to supporting economic growth and job creation in northern Ontario, and we will continue to do this through our economic action plan and through the efforts of organizations like FedNor.

Mr. Bruce Hyer: Mr. Speaker, I want to underscore another part of the government's plan that has real effect on the economy of Canada and northwestern Ontario, and that is its wilful ignorance, even outright hostility, to facts or science that contradicts its ideological beliefs.

One example is its obsession with closing the Experimental Lakes Area in northwestern Ontario at a cost of tens of millions in lost research and billions in future environmental and health impacts that could have been prevented.

Another example just happened yesterday when the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy, itself axed by the government, revealed that the government was attempting to bury a lot of its valuable information.

Erasing inconvenient facts and muzzling scientists and policy experts undermines our ability to weigh evidence and to make good policy decisions.

• (2115)

Ms. Candice Bergen: Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to ensuring that Canada's vast mineral wealth be developed as a vital part of our national economy. I want to highlight the Ring of Fire, which will be at the forefront of a mining renaissance in our country.

The Ring of Fire has the potential to create over 5,000 direct and indirect jobs in northern Ontario alone, plus significant spinoff benefits throughout the province. That is why our economic action plan 2013 and our Harper government has committed to \$4.4 million over three years for initiatives like a Ring of Fire capacity-building initiative through FedNor.

Clearly, we are committed to the people of northern Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): I would remind all hon. members not to use the name of any members, including the Prime Minister, when speaking in the chamber.

The hon. member for Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia.

[*Translation*]

FIREARMS REGISTRY

Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity today to come back to the important matter of controlling the movement and ownership of firearms. Such gun control is necessary.

The government decided to destroy the registry, a tool that helps save lives, a tool with a proven track record. Despite six unanimous motions at the National Assembly calling on the government to give up its ideological crusade against this registry that was heavily used by police forces, the government dug in its heels.

Quebeckers know that the registry saves lives. Community organizations that often see how useful and effective this tool is also ask that access to this type of registry be maintained. When the members of Quebec's National Assembly saw how inflexible the federal government was about this, they unanimously asked that Quebec's portion of the data contained in the now dismantled registry be transferred to the province.

In light of the government's determination and rush to destroy not only the registry, but all the data it contained, including information on firearms owners in Quebec, the Government of Quebec had no choice but to appeal to the courts to assert its rights. Quebec wants to

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keep data from the registry about Quebec. The request is clear, simple and legitimate.

On September 12, 2012, the Government of Quebec obtained an injunction preventing the Quebec data in the gun registry from being destroyed. Here is an excerpt from that ruling:

Although the firearms registry was established pursuant to the federal government's criminal law power, it created a partnership with Quebec, particularly with regard to the Registry's data. The principles of constitutional interpretation do not allow a level of government, in the very specific and unique context of this case, to enact a legislative provision whose main purpose is to prevent other levels of government from using the fruits of this partnership in the exercise of their legislative powers.

The legal battle continues. Instead of acquiescing to Quebec's request and transferring the data, the federal government is digging in its heels and continuing to demonstrate a lack of openness, respect and understanding in the face of this request that is so important to Quebeckers. It is even appealing the injunction, at a significant cost to taxpayers.

Quebec's public safety minister, Stéphane Bergeron, decided to move forward and stop waiting. In February, he introduced bill 20, which aims to create a Quebec gun registry. This bill will prevent a legal vacuum and will allow for data that were previously contained in the federal registry to be properly moved to the Quebec registry.

Will the government listen to Quebec's request and agree to hand the data over to Quebec?

• (2120)

[*English*]

Ms. Candice Bergen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to have the opportunity to answer the member's question, and to once again highlight our government's commitment to law-abiding long-gun owners in Canada.

For far too long, law-abiding gun owners in Canada who were licensed to own firearms and use firearms for legitimate purposes throughout the country in rural areas, including in rural areas of Quebec, have been targeted. They were targeted by a wasteful and ineffective long gun registry.

The long-gun registry cost \$2 billion to set up, as reported by the CBC. There is absolutely no evidence whatsoever, nor is there any testimony from front-line police officers, that the long-gun registry has or had any ability to stop any kind of crime, much less violent gun crime. There are a number of reasons for that. Primarily, the data contained in the database of the long-gun registry was completely inaccurate. Only half of the firearms in Canada were actually in the database of the long-gun registry, because not every long gun was registered.

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Therefore, police officers could not rely on the data. They testified numerous times in committee meetings regarding the bill that the government and I introduced to end the long-gun registry. I was at every committee meeting and I heard from front-line officers over and over again who said they could never count on the data. If they went on a call and the data said there were no firearms there, they knew they had to make sure to check, because many times the data was inaccurate.

We had a commitment that we made to the Canadian people and to long gun owners in Canada. We fulfilled that commitment. We scrapped the long-gun registry and we destroyed the data.

Certainly, if Quebec wants to set up its own gun registry, it is free to do that. However, I would suggest that in this time of the fiscal restraint it is going to cost millions of dollars, if not billions, to do so. It will do nothing to stop violent crime. It does nothing to end suicide, and it does not stop violence.

The measure we have in place with regard to gun control in Canada is the licensing mechanism. It may be that my hon. colleague does not understand the difference. Licensing means individuals go through a background check and a mental health check. Many times their spouses are consulted to see if they can legitimately, legally and safely own a firearm. That is where we have the ability to stop people from getting guns.

The majority of people who get guns illegally are doing so because they are involved in gangs, drugs and organized crime. That is where we have introduced legislation to get tough on organized crime and introduce mandatory minimum sentences for gun crimes. Unfortunately, the member and his party do not support any of those measures.

We will continue to stand up for law-abiding gun owners. There is only one party in the House that consistently stands up for long gun owners, because we know the NDP would reintroduce the long-gun registry, and that is the Conservative Party.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-François Fortin: Mr. Speaker, it is amusing to see the Conservatives talk about a costly and ineffective registry when the registry produced results. There were organizations that could very simply show the impact of adopting the registry.

Yes, there are costs involved. Speaking of costs, do we need to remind the government that Quebecers helped pay to set it up? Part of the registry and the data it contained must be returned to Quebec, since Quebec requested it.

We can see that the Conservatives have no understanding of the issue of transferring the data. The parliamentary secretary talks about a lack of understanding. I fully understand the mechanisms, since I have hunting and gun licences.

I do not think that, for the government, that should be a barrier to transferring the data to Quebec.

The government must transfer the data.

[*English*]

Ms. Candice Bergen: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that the hon. member does understand the licensing process, and I appreciate his comments on that.

I would challenge him to bring any evidence forward that shows the registry portion of the firearms control program that was previously established in Canada has or had any effect on stopping one single crime.

The logic behind thinking that we can somehow stop a crime if we count the guns of law-abiding gun owners is completely flawed. It is impossible. That is why we committed to ending the long-gun registry, and we had the support of the Canadian people. We destroyed the data outside of Quebec. If Quebec wants to set up its own registry, it is absolutely free to do so, but we will not be supporting it.

• (2125)

[*Translation*]

AEROSPACE INDUSTRY

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Last spring and summer, I had some very interesting meetings with various stakeholders in the aerospace industry. They told me that the Canadian aerospace industry is a successful sector that provides 66,000 very good jobs in Canada.

Furthermore, this sector generates revenues of more than \$22 billion. These people also told me that the aerospace industry is at a crossroads. The competition is getting fiercer and, unfortunately, Canada is losing ground as the Conservative government stands idly by. They also told me that they could not understand why the government purchases planes and helicopters from other countries.

When the Deloitte & Touche report gave federal aerospace programs a D, the Minister of Industry ordered Mr. Emerson to review the aerospace industry. His report provided 17 recommendations for the aeronautics industry and eight recommendations for the space program. The Jenkins report on military procurement was released after that.

The Minister of Industry said that these reports would not collect dust and that the government would take action. We have been waiting for the government to take meaningful action since December. The Conservatives will of course tell us that this is covered in the 2013 budget, but everyone knows that the budget is an empty shell and there is no long-term vision. What the aerospace industry needs is a long-term commitment from the government as well as long-term predictable programs.

The industry does not look at the future in blocks of four-year terms between elections. The industry plans over the course of 5, 10, 15 or 20 years. That is planning for the future. What it would like to see is a clear commitment from the government about the 17 recommendations in this report that were made very carefully in response to consultations with players in the aerospace industry. We are still waiting.

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Why is it that the government has not yet recognized that the aerospace industry is a strategic sector for our economy and that it creates very high-quality jobs, which add significant value to the manufacturing sector, export products and so on? How is it that this government is not giving a clear indication to the aerospace industry that it is truly committed to supporting the sector, not just until 2015, but beyond 2015, with a long-term vision?

There is also the issue of space, but I will stick to the aerospace industry. We are still waiting for a clear signal proving that the government recognizes this strategic and important sector of our economy.

[*English*]

Ms. Candice Bergen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to respond to my hon. colleague's question regarding our government's support for the aerospace industry.

Canada's aerospace industry is a world leader. Our aerospace productivity growth outpaced the rest of the G7 over the last 10 years, and the industry as a whole has an enviable reputation, with acknowledged leadership in business and regional aircraft, small gas turbine engines, flight simulators, civil helicopters, aircraft landing gear and environmental control systems.

The industry contributes over \$11 billion to the economy as well as another \$14 billion from indirect and induced work. Its cutting-edge work supports 160,000 Canadian jobs.

Our government puts a high priority on the aerospace sector. Just last week, economic action plan 2013 provided close to \$1 billion for the strategic aerospace and defence initiative and established a new aerospace technology demonstration program. The government is also committed to consulting stakeholders on the establishment of a national aerospace research and technology network.

Our government is continuing to study the report's findings and will take action over the coming year to improve the focus and coordination of programs and practices relevant to the aerospace and space industries.

These initiatives are in addition to broader measures outlined in Canada's economic action plan 2013 that are helping manufacturers and businesses across Canada succeed in the global economy, including tax relief for new manufacturing machinery and equipment, support for skills development and training, and investment in leading-edge research infrastructure, to name just a few.

These investments benefit the whole economy, including the aerospace industry, which is a Canadian manufacturing and research

and development leader. We are very proud to continue the support that we have been giving to our aerospace sector.

● (2130)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc: Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out that urgent action is needed. The Emerson report shows that the government fell asleep at the wheel. We do not expect planes or aircraft, but we see that the government has been asleep at the wheel for a few years and that it has some catching up to do. Now is not the time to wait. Now is the time to act. The measures proposed in the budget will take effect in 2014-15.

What is more, we are wondering about the aerospace technology demonstration program. Will this program be enough? Will the government really take action? Once again, I would like to remind my colleague that neither the Minister of Industry nor the Prime Minister has sent a clear message saying that the aerospace industry is a strategic sector that must be included on the science and technology program list.

[*English*]

Ms. Candice Bergen: Mr. Speaker, Canada's aerospace industry is anchoring thousands of high-skill jobs across our country.

Our government knows that innovation, ideas and ingenuity are what will matter in tomorrow's economy. Innovation is the best way for high-wage economies like ours to compete with countries around the world and to create jobs here at home.

Economic action plan 2013 demonstrates the government's commitment to encouraging innovation in the aerospace and space industries, with stable funding of nearly \$1 billion over five years to the strategic aerospace and defence initiative, the creation of an aerospace technology demonstration program and the launch of consultations for the creation of a national aerospace research and technology network.

We are supporting this important industry and we will continue to do so.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a. m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 9:33 p.m.)

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