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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, May 2, 2013

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, May 2, 2013

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1000)
[*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)(b), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to one petition.

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OFFSHORE HEALTH AND SAFETY ACT

Hon. Gerry Ritz (for the Minister of Natural Resources) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-61, An Act to amend the Canada-Newfoundland Atlantic Accord Implementation Act, the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Resources Accord Implementation Act and other Acts and to provide for certain other measures.

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

* * *

[*Translation*]

SUPPORT FOR VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS ACT

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-504, An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code (volunteer firefighters).

She said: Mr. Speaker, today, I am pleased to introduce my bill to amend the Canada Labour Code for volunteer firefighters, which is seconded by the hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

This bill will strongly reaffirm Canada's and the House's commitment to volunteer and part-time firefighters. It will give them protection under the Canada Labour Code so that their employer cannot, without just cause—and I want to emphasize that point—prevent them from or discipline them for meeting their obligations and responding to calls as firefighters.

This is a wonderful opportunity for the House to reaffirm its commitment to volunteer firefighters. In many rural areas, it is

becoming increasingly difficult to recruit volunteer firefighters, and it is very difficult for fire departments to get their forces together between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. on weekdays.

This will provide real help to firefighters and to all communities, particularly those in rural areas.

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

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PUBLIC SERVANTS DISCLOSURE PROTECTION ACT

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-505, An Act to amend the Public Servants Disclosure Protection Act (powers of inquiry).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I would first like to thank the hon. member for Louis-Hébert for agreeing to second my bill.

I am very pleased to introduce in the House my bill to amend the Public Servants Disclosure Protection Act. The government has not yet put in place a process for the review of this act, which, incidentally, was supposed to be done in April 2012. I think it is important to give this law more teeth. This will allow us to ensure that the government is more accountable and responsible, particularly at a time when services for Canadians are in jeopardy and are being hard hit by cuts to the federal public service.

This legislative measure therefore amends the Public Servants Disclosure Protection Act in order to extend the time limit for the filing of a complaint, to allow the Public Sector Integrity Commissioner to examine former public servants, to increase the fine for an offence under section 10 of the Inquiries Act and to authorize the commissioner to disclose, in his or her report, the identity of the person found to have committed a wrongdoing.

Routine Proceedings

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

* * *

●(1005)

[English]

PETITIONS

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today to present these petitions signed by numerous members of my constituency of Sudbury. They ask the government to look at protecting consumers from gas price gouging.

The petitioners maintain that gas prices fluctuate erratically, with prices prone to wide variations between communities and sharp spikes in anticipation of higher demand. They are calling on the Minister of Industry to present legislation on behalf of the government to protect Canadian consumers from the high price gouging we are seeing by some gasoline retailers.

GENETICALLY MODIFIED ALFALFA

Mr. Peter Braid (Kitchener—Waterloo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present today.

The first relates to the issue of genetically modified alfalfa. These individuals are concerned about the potential impacts on the organic food industry.

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Mr. Peter Braid (Kitchener—Waterloo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition relates to the Canada Elections Act. In this case, as I understand it, signatures were obtained over a period of approximately two years.

GENETICALLY MODIFIED ALFALFA

Mr. Gary Schellenberger (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I stand today to present this petition from constituents in my riding. They would like to see a moratorium on the release of genetically modified alfalfa.

MOTOR VEHICLE SAFETY

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions.

The first comes from petitioners across Canada asking the government to make side guards on heavy trucks mandatory. They note that this is one of the key recommendations from the chief coroner of Ontario.

They also note that recently, some of the industry leaders—Shu-Pak, for example—have installed side guards on their trucks. It takes less than a day and costs less than \$800 to install these side guards, and they can save the lives of the thousands of cyclists, pedestrians and runners who are now out on the streets because summer has arrived here in Canada.

PARKS CANADA

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from people across Canada. They note that the Rideau Canal, which is a UNESCO world heritage site, and the Trent-Severn Waterways are both national historic sites and represent

a significant part of our Canadian heritage. They are renowned all over the world for their natural beauty and engineering and are a vital part of the economies of their respective regions.

That is why the petitioners are calling on Parks Canada to make sure that these two UNESCO sites are returned to the 2011 operating hours and length of season in order for Canadians and visitors to safely enjoy these waterways.

EXPERIMENTAL LAKES AREA

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of several residents of Atlantic Canada who are concerned about the decision with respect to the Experimental Lakes Area.

These petitioners call on the government to recognize the importance of the Experimental Lakes Area to the government's mandate to study, preserve and protect aquatic ecosystems, and to reverse the decision to close the ELA research station.

●(1010)

THE ENVIRONMENT

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

The first is from residents of Tofino, British Columbia, and Winnipeg, Manitoba. They are calling on the government to cease its promotional stance in relation to the proposed northern gateway pipeline project involving the risky supertanker scheme off the coast of British Columbia.

41ST GENERAL ELECTION

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from residents of Vancouver, Ottawa and Victoria. They are calling on the government to institute a full and independent investigation of the attempt to defraud and mislead voters in the 2011 election, as well as to investigate multiple violations of the Canada Elections Act.

[Translation]

DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE

Mr. Jean-François Larose (Repentigny, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of Development and Peace.

Unfortunately, in response to the cuts and changes to CIDA programs, this petition seeks to change the government's attitude. As we well know, CIDA is about to disappear. Development and Peace has proven itself time and time again, and it would be good for the government to change its attitude and respect the direction international aid is going in.

[English]

BASHIR MAKHTAL

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition to file today on behalf of a number of people in Saskatchewan, particularly students at the University of Saskatchewan, who are expressing their concern about the treatment of a Canadian citizen, Bashir Makhtal, who is presently imprisoned in Ethiopia.

The petitioners are expressing concern about how the Canadian government can pay better attention to the circumstances of this individual.

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QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 1238 and 1239.

[Text]

Question No. 1238—**Ms. Libby Davies:**

With regard to Human Resources and Skills Development Canada's Homelessness Partnering Strategy: (a) what does Homelessness Partnership Strategy define as 'supported housing'; and (b) is this the definition used for funding supported housing projects within the Homelessness Partnering Strategy?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), the term used under the homelessness partnership strategy is "supportive housing". Under the homelessness partnership strategy, supportive housing is defined as "housing for individuals and families that includes supports and services integrated into the housing, and no length-of-stay duration. Services depend on clients' needs and are provided to help residents maintain independence and stability to promote social inclusion".

With regard to (b), the definition of supportive housing is used for funding housing projects within the homelessness partnership strategy. All activities funded by the homelessness partnership strategy must be eligible under the terms and conditions of the program. The program terms and conditions can be found at the following web address: http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/homelessness/funding/terms_conditions.shtml.

Question No. 1239—**Ms. Libby Davies:**

With regard to the tax subsidies for private health insurance plans under the Income Tax Act in the 2011 fiscal year: (a) what was the total value of the deductions, in terms of foregone tax revenue, provided to corporations for their contributions to employee health insurance plans; (b) what was the value of the deductions, in terms of foregone tax revenue, provided to corporations for their contributions to employee prescription drug plans; (c) what was the total tax expenditure for the Medical Expense Tax Credit; and (d) what amount of the tax expenditure for the Medical Expense Tax Credit was for premiums paid for private drug insurance plans?

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a) and (b), contributions to employee health and prescription drugs insurance plans are part of the broader category of "employee benefits" and are not required to be reported as separate items on the corporate income tax return. In the absence of reliable tax data representing a broad cross-section of Canadian corporations, the Department of Finance is not able to provide the requested information.

With regard to (c) and (d), the medical expense tax credit, METC, recognizes the effect of above-average medical or disability-related expenses on an individual's ability to pay tax. It is calculated by reference to the lowest personal income tax rate for the taxation year. For 2011, the METC was available for qualifying medical expenses in excess of the lesser of \$2,052—indexed to inflation at \$2,109 in 2012 and \$2,152 in 2013—or 3% of net income.

Government Orders

The tax expenditure related to the METC for the 2011 calendar year is estimated to be \$1.19 billion, as noted in the 2012 tax expenditures and evaluations report.

The Department of Finance is not able to determine the tax expenditure for premiums paid for private health services plans claimed under the METC, as expenditure amounts relating to specific items claimed under the METC are not reported separately on the income tax return.

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[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if Question No. 1243 could be made an order for return, this return would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 1243—**Hon. Lawrence MacAulay:**

With regard to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, what is the location, nature, and cost of each Small Craft Harbours project which has been undertaken since January 1, 2005?

(Return tabled)

[English]

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Mr. Speaker, I ask that the remaining questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

ECONOMIC ACTION PLAN 2013 ACT, NO. 1

BILL C-60—TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC) moved:

That, in relation to Bill C-60, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 21, 2013 and other measures, not more than four further sitting days shall be allotted to the consideration at second reading stage of the Bill; and

that, 15 minutes before the expiry of the time provided for Government Orders on the fourth day allotted to the consideration at second reading stage of the said Bill, any proceedings before the House shall be interrupted, if required for the purpose of this Order, and, in turn, every question necessary for the disposal of the said stage of the Bill shall be put forthwith and successively, without further debate or amendment.

The Speaker: We will now have a 30-minute question and comment period.

The hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

Government Orders

[*Translation*]

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am not too happy to be here yet again. This government has no respect for Parliament or the process, especially when we have before us a huge bill like this, which will amend almost 60 acts.

[*English*]

It is incredible that with its majority, the government feels some need to constantly inflict time allocation upon Canada's Parliament, and this further breaks the record. The Conservatives seem to have no shame whatsoever that they will be known forevermore as the government that shut down debate more often in Parliament than all other governments in Canadian history, governments that I am sure the Conservatives used to loathe.

I can remember that when the Liberals were in power and used the same measure to shut things down just as debate was getting started, the Conservative members who are now the Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs got up in this place from the very seats where I am standing and said it was wrong and inappropriate for the government to use the tactic time and time again. Now with these omnibus bills we see the Conservative government further abusing the systems we have in place to hold the government to account, as all members of Parliament are meant to do.

The Conservatives feel absolutely no shame. If they showed a little shame, it would give some hope. If they stood in their places today to say that they were sorry and that it was unfortunate that they have to keep using these bullying tactics in Parliament, but it is what they have to do because of such and such a situation, it would give some hope. However, that is not the case here.

The Conservatives have grown addicted to this particular tactic, apparently thinking that holding government to account no longer is important, yet we have seen the same government lose \$3 billion meant for national security. The Conservatives shrug and say, "Big deal". Well, it is a big deal to Canadians.

Why can the Conservative government not simply allow Parliament to do its job and allow members of Parliament to do their jobs on behalf of their constituents, instead of using these heavy-handed bullying tactics time and time again?

• (1015)

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments from my hon. colleague across the way, but there are a lot of inaccuracies in some of the comments that he made.

This is a very important piece of legislation. This is the blueprint of our government's mandate moving forward, our plan to continue to create jobs, help businesses continue to create jobs, help grow the economy and help the long-term prosperity of this country. We think it is very important that we move this along.

However, the most important factual error that I need to point out is that we are providing five full days of debate before the bill ever goes to committee. As we all know, this is the primary phase, wherein the bill is discussed in the House of Commons and then moves to committee.

We felt that five days was more than adequate. We will then move the bill to committee and, once again, to make sure that we have more than adequate time to debate all of the clauses, the bill will go to more than just the finance committee this year.

The Deputy Speaker: I will ask all members henceforth to limit their questions and comments to approximately one minute.

The hon. member for Wascana.

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with respect to the timing issue here, obviously it is unfortunate when debate in the House is curtailed by the use of time allocation or closure. That impinges upon the democratic right of members of Parliament to adequately consider matters that are before the House.

I look at the calendar on the table before you, Mr. Speaker, and it properly identifies today as May 2. The budget was presented on March 21. It has been well over a month since the budget was presented and yet the legislation to implement a portion of it has only been put before the House in the last couple of days. It seems a bit unusual for the government to move so expeditiously to bring time allocation to the discussion of the budget when it has had well over a month to put the legislation before the House.

I would like to ask the minister a very specific question. He has said the subject matter will go to a variety of committees; that may be useful. Would he go the further step and make sure that the House has the opportunity to vote on each one of the subject heads separately so that we are not confronted with one omnibus vote at the end of it all where we have to vote on soup to nuts all together at once, thus defeating the principle of proper democratic—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of State for Finance.

Hon. Ted Menzies: Mr. Speaker, I would point out to my hon. colleague from Wascana that the budget was actually tabled in the House almost 50 days ago. There has been ample discussion in question period about some of the items referred to in the budget. There have been answers to clarify many of those questions, and we know that this place always gives good answers to good questions.

I am not sure which Liberal finance minister's budget it was in 2001, but I would remind that hon. member that in 2001 there was a slightly larger bill than the present budget implementation bill and closure was forced on that. Members had three days in the House of Commons to debate that bill. There was no option for it to go to more committees than just one.

I would suggest that through transparency we are providing more opportunities for politicians to debate the budget implementation bill and more opportunities for witnesses to state their concerns or their support for what is in the budget.

• (1020)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is with sadness that I rise today to ask my colleague a question.

As we know, this government has already broken the record for the most time allocation motions in Canadian history. Today again it has introduced a motion to cut the debate short.

Government Orders

On Monday, for the first time, we had an opportunity to see the content of the budget implementation bill. Today is Thursday and we are being told that we have four days left to study a bill that will amend almost 60 different federal laws.

If we do the math, this bill, which is about 100 pages in length, will amend approximately 10 acts a day. We are being asked to read it on a Monday for the first time and vote on it the following Tuesday, yet this 100-page bill amends 50 pieces of legislation.

How does my colleague suppose that, as parliamentarians, we will be able to fully examine the bill and make informed decisions?

[*English*]

Hon. Ted Menzies: Mr. Speaker, my colleague's question provides me with the opportunity to remind him and other hon. members that this legislation, should it be approved, will go to multiple committees after second reading, where it will be studied and witnesses will come forward and speak to the pieces of legislation that need updating.

Our fundamental role as government is to move forward with the plan that we put forward following the recession, a plan that I would argue has been very successful, especially when it is benchmarked against other countries, many of them in recession. Eight of the seventeen large economies in the European Union are in recession while Canada continues to grow. We continue to grow because we have kept the plan for jobs and growth and the long-term prosperity of this country.

Mr. Royal Galipeau (Ottawa—Orléans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have been listening attentively to the comments made from all corners of the House. I was particularly impressed by claims on the side of demagoguery made by the opposition House leader when he referred, for instance, to the Minister of Foreign Affairs speaking in the House during the 37th and 38th Parliament. He was not a member of the 39th Parliament. He never sat in opposition in the House.

Then the member made reference to the Auditor General's report and an amount of money having been lost. Well, sorry, the Auditor General never said any such thing and never wrote any such thing.

That is my comment.

• (1025)

Hon. Ted Menzies: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for pointing that out. I knew the House leader for the official opposition was probably referring to another minister from that time who sits on the front bench.

However, it does give me an opportunity to remind hon. members that we are being encouraged to get this done as soon as possible. If I have the opportunity, I will go through a litany of supportive quotes from different associations, different industries and businesses across the country.

In fact, just last evening I met an individual who is on the board of Genome Canada. I was not even aware that he was on the board. He thanked us for the contribution to Genome Canada and highlighted some of the incredible work that it has done. He said the sooner we can get that money flowing, the sooner it can get this science to work. His main theme was in the agricultural sector. There have been

incredible breakthroughs through Genome Canada, and we need to get this money out as soon as we can to get it working on that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-François Larose (Repentigny, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that is cowardly and insulting.

We keep saying that every time they introduce a bill, everything gets lumped in together. This budget, yet again, contains a large number of provisions. Of course we oppose some of them. That stands to reason. Since they do not have the courage of their convictions, they lump everything in together and try to hide things.

Once again, they want to speed up the process and shove this bill down our throats, assuming that we are all idiots. I cannot understand it. Either this is urgent or the government needs therapy.

If this is urgent, is it because there is a zombie invasion? Is it the end of the world? Is that why we need to hurry and cannot take time for debate? If the government needs therapy, honestly, I would be happy to give out hugs.

[*English*]

Hon. Ted Menzies: Mr. Speaker, I thought we put the issue of zombies to bed. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, in answering a question one day, actually did put that fear to bed, so I am glad that is not going to happen.

There are a number of items that I would suggest are very urgent. We consulted broadly with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. It thanked us, first of all, for making the gas tax rebate to municipalities permanent. Then it thanked us for the legislation that we put in place so that municipalities could legally put it in their budgets. However, it did say to us that their costs continue to go up with inflation and asked if there was any way they could have that gas tax fund indexed. We went through it and did the number crunching, and it is feasible. We understand the challenges that municipalities are facing, so we indexed the gas tax fund.

We need to get this legislation through so the municipalities have confirmation that they can continue with their infrastructure projects.

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate we have time allocation so early in this process because there are some important questions that a more thorough debate would possibly deal with.

Youth employment numbers are actually five points worse than they were five years ago. Young Canadians are looking for work. Students are looking for work. In fact, last summer we saw the worst summer jobs numbers since Stats Canada started tracking those number in the 1970s. It is estimated hundreds of thousands of young Canadians are working in unpaid internships. Why, at a time like this, is there nothing in the budget implementation bill to help young Canadians find opportunities?

There is one measure, the first-time donor—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I am limiting questions to one minute. The member will please take his seat.

The hon. Minister of State.

Government Orders

Hon. Ted Menzies: Mr. Speaker, I think I understood what the hon. member was getting at, which is the first-time donor's credit.

The hon. member will have heard many witnesses come before the finance committee during its study of charitable giving. He would have heard the challenges of many of the associations that pleaded for more support. The not-for-profit and charitable organizations in this country are feeling the same pinch that many of the companies are. Therefore, we felt this was an appropriate way.

Many young Canadians want to start giving, so this is an opportunity to leverage their charitable giving, which I think is an honourable goal.

•(1030)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is an outrage. I am furious.

This government is asking us to hastily pass the budget, yet we have learned that there is \$29 billion worth of declared, acknowledged tax debt and \$11 billion in disputed tax debt, for a total of \$40 billion in tax debt. We have no way of knowing how much of that money is going into tax havens. Historically speaking, Statistics Canada carried out that kind of analysis, but it no longer has the budget to do so.

I am outraged because the Conservatives are not asking us to vote on a budget; they are asking us to vote on a sieve. Would it not seem slightly more reasonable to the government member for us look at what we are really spending and what revenue we are missing out on? Could the government be logical or exercise sound management for once?

[*English*]

Hon. Ted Menzies: Mr. Speaker, with respect to tax havens—or aggressive tax planning, as it is referred to by accountants in a more equitable fashion—we need to make sure that taxes are levied fairly across all Canadians. That is our fundamental principle. Honest, hard-working Canadians pay their taxes, and there should not be those who are able to avoid that, whether internationally through holding companies or whatever it may be. Those are challenges that the Canada Revenue Agency is dealing with. It has had a tremendous success rate using our double taxation agreements with many countries, and we continue to add to that list of countries. The foreign investment promotion protection agreements help us on that as well.

There are items in this budget that will help us crack down on tax avoiders.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk about a principle that we hold dear here in the House of Commons, the principle of democracy in action. This government, which was elected in a democratic country, is showing a total lack of respect for democracy and the debates that are needed to ensure that bills are studied by representatives of all Canadians, regardless of their party.

Could the parliamentary secretary tell us what he thinks about the fact that this time allocation motion is not allowing Canadians to

benefit from the representation they deserve because it does not allow the budget to be fully examined and understood on their behalf?

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The hon. Minister of State has both had a promotion and now a demotion. I think he still remains the Minister of State for Finance.

Hon. Ted Menzies: Mr. Speaker, I do appreciate that recognition. It is an easy mistake to make because I did fill that role, a role that is covered very ably by our colleague from Saint Boniface, who has handled this file very well.

There are five full days of debate within the House of Commons. Once it moves from this place, it then goes to multiple committees. We are still working on which committees it should go to. That provides an incredible number of hours to debate it.

Rather than standing up and asking process questions, the hon. member had lots of time to ask me a specific question about something that was in the first budget implementation act 1. She chose not to.

•(1035)

Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the minister for recognizing that I am looking forward to riding my motorcycle this weekend.

On a very serious note, it is quite concerning that we once again see debate being shut down in the House. All of us were elected in the House to represent the voices of our constituents and to debate ideas. In the budget and in the budget implementation bill there are good ideas and bad ideas. In the House is where we are supposed to debate them, both good and bad. It also gives us the opportunity to find things that were done right and done wrong.

Last week, my office went through the budget implementation bill and found an oversight by the government. When it was talking about hockey equipment and the tariffs, it forgot about helmets. By our bringing that forward, the Minister of Finance changed it. Would keeping debate going not allow us to find the errors and the good things in this bill, fix it and make it better for all Canadians?

Hon. Ted Menzies: Mr. Speaker, I actually thought I was going to get a question about motorcycle helmets, not hockey helmets, but that is fair enough.

We made certain that hockey helmets are exempt protective headgear. Protective headgear was a definitional issue, so we made sure that hockey helmets were part of that. I hope the hon. member did not actually have a copy of the budget implementation bill last week, because it only tabled in the House recently.

There has been plenty of time, and this points out something very important. The hon. member was able to stand in his place and ask questions on that. I would encourage other members to do the same in the four days after today. The best use of their time would be to ask questions about what is actually in budget implementation act 1.

Government Orders

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I wish to support the points that have been made by the House leader of the official opposition and the House leader for the Liberal Party. Limiting debate is always antidemocratic, but I want to raise the particular situation of members of Parliament who, like me, are members of parties that obviously lack 12 members in the House. That would apply to members of the Bloc Québécois and to other independent members as well as to the Green Party.

We do not have the opportunity to sit on committee, and every time debate is limited, we are precluded from any opportunity to speak to the bills. While it is always antidemocratic for every member in the House, it is particularly egregious in the case of members like me, who never have an opportunity to speak for 10 or 20 minutes on the bills that are debated in this place, because there is almost always time allocation.

I would like to ask the junior minister to please reconsider limiting debate, because it is particularly antidemocratic.

Hon. Ted Menzies: Mr. Speaker, with no disrespect meant to my hon. colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands, she had 30 seconds or perhaps a minute—I was not timing it—to ask me a substantive question about this, to follow the debate, instead of asking what I hear so often from the NDP, a process question. There are a lot of things in this piece of legislation that could be discussed, a lot of positive things that Canadians are waiting for. They are urgently asking us to get this done. I refer to the funding for Genome Canada. Also, the mandate of the Nature Conservancy of Canada will soon expire, and it is looking for the replenishment that we have set out in the bill to help preserve natural lands all across this country. The Nature Conservancy is hoping we get this done as soon as possible.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, once again, I rise in this House of Commons, because the government is imposing yet another gag order to prevent members from asking the government questions and from holding it to account on a bill that it has introduced in the House.

Let me repeat that this bill is amending dozens of Canadian laws. I must also mention that it is ridiculous that the member opposite is talking about science when the Conservatives have made cuts to science and technology. It is also ridiculous that he is talking about infrastructure, because the Conservatives announced in this budget that they would spend less in that area.

The bill deserves to be debated in the House of Commons, because this budget will slow down the economy at a time when more and more Canadians are looking for jobs.

• (1040)

[*English*]

Hon. Ted Menzies: Mr. Speaker, ridiculous is a pretty harsh word, but since I am not the first one to use it, what would be ridiculous is to see the opposition vote against \$30 million for housing in Nunavut.

That would be ridiculous. The people of Nunavut need new housing. With the issues up there with property ownership, with fee simple, it is necessary that the Government of Canada step forward to help those individuals.

It would also be ridiculous to see palliative care deprived of \$3 million to help develop a palliative care plan that would help end-of-life patients all across this country.

I certainly hope the NDP members would take a second look at those sorts of pieces that are in this budget, which are important to Canadians, and I hope they would actually support them.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, my friend across the way complains about questions on process when what he has initiated today, through his House leader, is a debate on process.

Maybe he does not like these process questions because they highlight the fact that a government lacking in confidence has to keep ramming budget bills through, ramming through enormous pieces of legislation, in which we will have to debate ten pieces of law per day. That is what he thinks is sufficient debate: that on every day of these four or five budget days, we are going to change ten Canadian laws on average.

The member was asked a direct question by my friend down the way: if there are individual pieces in the budget implementation bill that are good and the opposition wants to support them, will he divide those up into separate votes? Of course he will not.

The Conservatives prefer this omnibus bill so they can then make these false accusations about programs we do not support, when he knows full well we do.

The Minister of National Defence got himself into a bit of trouble. When we went through the record, we found all sorts of things he had voted against when in opposition. He knows the way the system works, and he is trying to game the system.

Why not just come clean with Canadians and allow separate votes on the pieces of the omnibus bill so that opposition can declare their support or opposition to the various measures the government is offering?

Hon. Ted Menzies: Mr. Speaker, as the question was being put, I was reminded by the chair of the finance committee that not only is that where most of the work is done but that it is done clause by clause, not just in the finance committee but at all committees.

Everyone can substitute in on those committees, and I would encourage the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands to do the same thing, to sub in on a committee so she actually has an opportunity to hear the witnesses who appear on different clauses.

Hon. members in this House, and especially at committee, have ample time to debate all of these and to hear witnesses come forward. They have more time than they have had in the past, I would suggest, except for our last budget bill, for which we had an incredible amount of time. I would encourage them to get on with this process.

Government Orders

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I just heard the Minister of State say that we voted against some parts of the budget. Right beside him, however, the member for Edmonton—Leduc, the chair of the Standing Committee on Finance, said we supported some parts of the budget, but that we did so in committee.

If we do in fact support some parts of the budget, why does the government feel so free to stand up in this House and say the opposite of the truth regarding what we supported or did not support in committee? As the official opposition, we will support many things in committee.

[English]

Hon. Ted Menzies: Mr. Speaker, I think it is pretty obvious. The tradition of this House is, in a budget, to lay out the plan of the government for that year. It is the same as a business, and the board of directors in any business actually has the opportunity to say yea or nay on the budget.

It is the fundamental, go-forward plan for our government. It is making sure we continue on the path of growing jobs. We have 900,000 net new jobs since the end of the recession. That is pretty incredible. That is the best job growth record in all the G7 countries.

Obviously what we are doing is working. We need to stay on that plan and make sure we support families directly in a number of the measures that are in the budget. There is a piece in here to help caregivers stay home and look after their disabled family members.

These are important things to Canadians. However, the most important thing to Canadians is to make sure we continue with this plan, continue to grow the economy, and make this the best country on earth to live in.

● (1045)

The Deputy Speaker: It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings at this time and put forthwith the question on the motion now before the House.

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 nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

● (1125)

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

(Division No. 673)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambler
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Armstrong
Ashfield	Aspin
Baird	Bateman
Benoit	Bergen
Bernier	Bezan
Blaney	Block
Boughen	Braid
Breitkreuz	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Brown (Barrie)
Butt	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan
Carmichael	Carrie
Chisu	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Crockatt	Daniel
Davidson	Dechert
Devolin	Dreeshen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Dykstra
Fantino	Fast
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Flaherty
Fletcher	Galipeau
Gallant	Gill
Glover	Goguen
Gosal	Gourde
Grewal	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hayes
Hiebert	Hoback
Holder	James
Jean	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kent	Kerr
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lake	Lauzon
Lebel	Leaf
Lemieux	Leung
Lizon	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunney
MacKenzie	Mayes
McColeman	McLeod
Menegakis	Menzies
Merrifield	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Nicholson
Norlock	O'Neill Gordon
Opitz	O'Toole
Paradis	Payne
Poilievre	Preston
Raitt	Rajotte
Rathgeber	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Rickford	Ritz
Saxton	Schellenberger
Seeback	Shea
Shory	Smith
Sopuck	Sorenson
Stanton	Storseth
Strahl	Sweet
Tilson	Toet
Toews	Trost
Trottier	Truppe
Tweed	Uppal
Valcourt	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Wallace
Warkentin	Watson
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	
Wilks	Williamson
Wong	Woodworth
Yelich	Young (Oakville)
Young (Vancouver South)	Zimmer — 148

Government Orders

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Ashton
Atamanenko	Ayala
Bélanger	Bellavance
Bennett	Benskin
Bevington	Blanchette
Blanchette-Lamothe	Boivin
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brison	Brosseau
Byrne	Caron
Casey	Cash
Charlton	Chicoine
Choquette	Chow
Christopherson	Cleary
Coderre	Côté
Crowder	Cullen
Cuzner	Davies (Vancouver East)
Day	Dewar
Dion	Dionne Labelle
Donnelly	Dubé
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Dusseau	Easter
Eyking	Foote
Freeman	Garneau
Garrison	Genest
Genest-Jourdain	Giguère
Godin	Goodale
Gravelle	Grogulé
Hsu	Hyer
Jacob	Julian
Karygiannis	Kellway
Lapointe	Larose
Latendresse	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Liu	MacAulay
Mai	Marston
Martin	May
McCallum	McGuinty
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	Michaud
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)	Murray
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
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	Sitsabaiesan
St-Denis	Stewart
Stoffer	Sullivan
Thibeault	Toone
Tremblay	Turmel
Valeriote — 115	

PAIRED

Nil

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

I wish to inform the House that because of the proceedings on the time allocation motion, government orders will be extended by 30 minutes.

[Translation]

Ms. Françoise Boivin: Mr. Speaker, I believe that if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent for the following motion: “That this House call on the government to announce without delay what measures it plans to implement to respond to the motion adopted unanimously by the National Assembly of Quebec on April 16, 2013.”

[English]

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

[Translation]

SECOND READING

The House resumed from May 1 consideration of the motion that Bill C-60, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 21, 2013 and other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it was exactly two years ago when the people of Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques did me the honour and privilege of choosing me to represent them in the House of Commons. I would like to thank them once again. I believe I have done an excellent job these past two years, and I promise to honour the privilege bestowed upon me of representing them in the House.

It is very appropriate that I rise on this first day of the third year to debate Bill C-60, the federal government's first budget implementation bill. It is appropriate because, as others have already mentioned in this place, the official opposition will not be voting for the bill for a number of reasons. I could probably talk about the 125-page bill for an hour or an hour and a half. This bill is not as hefty as the previous one, but it is nevertheless an omnibus bill that we will call omnibus bill 3.0. This one bill will amend about 50 pieces of legislation with one vote. It is an important bill and we would have liked the Conservative government to be much more pragmatic given the very uncertain economic situation in which we find ourselves.

Yes, there was a major recession in 2008-09, and we are still feeling its effects. Contrary to what the Conservative government is saying, we are not out of the woods yet. In fact, the situation is still uncertain.

For instance, three weeks ago, the International Monetary Fund scaled back its forecast, its economic growth outlook for Canada, reducing it from 1.8% to 1.5%.

A rate of 1.5% in 2013 is less than what Canadian economists were predicting and less than what the Conservative government had predicted. The Minister of Finance predicted growth of 1.6%, and the minister himself admitted that it was a cautious projection. The IMF's projection is even lower than the finance minister's cautious forecast.

Very recently, just two weeks ago in fact, the OECD said that Canada would have one of the slowest growth rates during the first quarter of 2013, which contradicts what the parliamentary secretary was saying. According to him, Canada has the strongest economic growth in the G7. That is completely false. Canada's growth is slower than that of not only the United States, but also Japan, Germany and the G7 average and many G7 countries are still in serious trouble, including Italy for example, and to a lesser degree, France.

Government Orders

Why is the government doing the exact opposite of what it should be doing?

In her latest report, which the Standing Committee on Finance examined this week, the Parliamentary Budget Officer described budget 2013 as an austerity budget, much like budget 2012. The consequences of budget 2012 and budget 2013 mean that, in relation to our economic potential, measures included in budget 2013 will lead to a growth rate that is 0.57% lower than what it could have been without those austerity measures. In terms of job creation, if those austerity measures had not been included in the Conservative budget, we could have created 77,000 additional jobs over the next five years. That is not insignificant.

In the depths of the 2009 recession, Canada created a lot of jobs. This made sense, since we had hit rock bottom. However, the Conservative government's measures are curbing the growth we could achieve without these austerity measures. For example, the Parliamentary Budget Officer's report showed that we are nearly 2% below our potential for economic growth. Our growth is currently very slow, and the Conservatives's measures are doing nothing to improve that. On the contrary, they are limiting our economy's potential growth.

Anyone who does not believe me can read the report issued by the International Monetary Fund three weeks ago. This report says something very interesting:

• (1130)

[*English*]

Although fiscal consolidation is needed to rebuild fiscal space against future shocks, there is room to allow automatic stabilizers to operate fully if growth were to weaken further.

[*Translation*]

For those watching at home, I will point out that “fiscal consolidation” means “budget cuts” or “austerity measures” in order to balance the budget in 2015-16. This objective to balance the budget before the election is artificial and arbitrary. All Canadians know that.

The International Monetary Fund agrees with the general objective of balancing the budget at some point. It does not mention 2015-16 specifically; it talks about some point in an economic cycle. It also says that there is room for the federal government to allow automatic stabilizers to operate fully if growth were to weaken further. What are these automatic stabilizers? These are measures that directly help the public. We are talking about employment insurance and old age security. These programs are automatic stabilizers that can help avoid stalled economic growth by putting money in people's pockets, particularly people who will spend this money.

But what is the Conservative government doing? It is going against the IMF's recommendations and moving forward with fiscal consolidation, with austerity measures, decreasing the federal government's ability and willingness to strengthen stabilizers such as employment insurance and old age security benefits.

I wonder how we as the official opposition could vote in favour of a budget that flies in the face of growth and job creation in Canada.

Another factor prevents us from voting for this budget: it goes against what the government promised. The Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance and the Minister of State for Finance promised that there would be no tax increases for anyone in the 2013 budget. However, the opposite is true. There are numerous tax increases that total \$8 billion over the next five years, \$8 billion worth of tax increases.

We could have an adult discussion in the House, to determine whether the government's measures are reasonable. The government does not even want to consider this. Despite the evidence, it is still denying that there is even one tax increase in the 2013 budget.

The proof is the tax credit for labour-sponsored funds and venture capital corporation funds. The elimination of this tax credit is not included in Bill C-60, but it is something that we expect to see in the next budget implementation bill. This is worth mentioning. The government plans on getting rid of this tax credit, something that will ultimately mean a tax increase for small investors, people who invest small amounts in these labour-sponsored venture capital funds. This represents \$355 million over the next five years.

These labour-sponsored venture capital funds are essential for a number of reasons, one being that they help people save. The savings rate in Quebec was one of the lowest in Canada before the early 1980s, prior to the creation of the Fonds de solidarité FTQ. This fund enabled people to save and to set aside money for their old age. The government wants to eliminate the supplementary tax credit, the 15% labour fund tax credit, and in so doing, it will eliminate the major incentive to save that was provided by the Fonds de solidarité FTQ and now the CSN's Fondation.

It is also important for investment. Now we have a private venture capital industry, but the fact remains that most of the investment in regional economies comes from labour funds. It is important and interesting to note that one of the first organizations to speak out against the Conservative measure announced in the budget to eliminate the 15% labour fund tax credit was Canada's Venture Capital and Private Equity Association. Why was this group opposed to the measure? It was because it recognized the importance of these two major funds which, by the way, also invest, just like private venture capital organizations.

The government, looking for a good deal and thinking that it could get rid of one more labour organization, announced a totally regressive measure in the budget that goes against our need to encourage savings and venture capital investment.

Government Orders

•(1135)

Bill C-60 also contains another measure, which aims at increasing taxes by eliminating the additional deduction for credit unions and caisses populaires. Eliminating this deduction will lead to a tax hike of \$205 million by 2017-18.

The Conservative government is bringing in boutique tax credits and saying that they are tax reductions for Canadians, but of course when you get rid of labour fund or credit union tax credits, it is actually a tax hike.

By getting rid of this deduction, the Conservatives are ignoring the specific mandate of credit unions and caisses populaires. These are not profit-making institutions, as any surpluses are redistributed as dividends to the members, investors and depositors. It is important to note that the mandate of organizations such as credit unions and caisses populaires is very specific and also very different from the mandate of private financial institutions.

When I am in my home riding, I note that there are credit unions in Lac-des-Aigles, Esprit-Sain and Saint-Jean-de-Dieu. There are no longer any banks or bank branch offices, only credit unions. The reason for this is that, even though they are not the most lucrative institutions, they offer essential local services for the people in those areas. No bank is going to do this, and the additional deduction for credit unions and caisses populaires reflected this reality and their specific mandate.

Bill C-60 also eliminates the dividend tax credit, but I will not be able to go into this in detail because I also want to discuss other essential elements in the bill. By eliminating this tax credit, the government will recover \$2.4 billion over the next five years through tax increases. Here again, eliminating the tax credit is the same as raising taxes.

It is therefore not true to say that there are no tax increases, as the government has been saying, because there are tax increases totalling \$8 billion. I would like to list them all, but I realize that I will not have enough time.

There is a key and crucial element in Bill C-60, and that is the changes to the Investment Canada Act. This legislation requires the Minister of Industry to conduct a systematic review when the acquisition by a foreign company of a Canadian business exceeds a certain threshold, which is currently \$344 million. This means that any acquisition over \$344 million by a company operating in a country that is a member of the World Trade Organization, the WTO, must be reviewed.

It should be noted that the dollar amount has been increasing gradually. In 1997, the threshold was set at \$172 million. Over the years, the threshold has been increased to its current level of \$344 million. Over the next three years, the government will be increasing the threshold to \$1 billion. Therefore, all acquisitions under \$1 billion—for instance an acquisition valued at \$800 million or \$900 million—will no longer be reviewed by Industry Canada to determine whether they are likely to be of net benefit to Canada and meet Canada's economic development requirements.

Furthermore, the legislation also specifies that foreign state-owned enterprises will not be covered by this higher threshold.

Therefore, a Chinese, Indian, European, American or North American state-owned company that wants to invest and make an acquisition will not be subject to the new threshold levels, and the minimum threshold will still be \$344 million.

This is obviously a response to the Prime Minister's statement in December 2012 on the acquisition of Nexen by CNOOC, a Chinese state-owned company. The Prime Minister said at that time:

•(1140)

[*English*]

When we say that Canada is open for business, we do not mean that Canada is for sale to foreign governments.

[*Translation*]

However, that is clearly the direction this is going in. The Conservative government is blind to the fact that this measure is absolutely useless and will be challenged by companies such as CNOOC as soon as the government signs the FIPA, the Foreign Investment Protection Agreement.

It could be challenged right out of the gate because FIPA gives foreign companies, including foreign state-owned enterprises, the right to the same treatment as a Canadian company.

With a provision like that—which is meant to exclude CNOOC or any other investor from those provisions or an increase in that threshold—a company will say that there is no national treatment, that it is not being treated like a Canadian business, which is not subject to the Investment Canada Act. The Conservative government is trying to please everyone with measures that make absolutely no sense and that are inconsistent with its international trade measures.

Part 3, division 17 of Bill C-60 allows the federal government to meddle directly in collective bargaining within Canada's crown corporations. The government does not even hide the fact that it is targeting the CBC, VIA Rail and Canada Post.

The Treasury Board Secretariat oversees all of this independently, because crown corporations are supposed to operate at arm's length.

Under this bill, the Treasury Board Secretariat can give direct instructions to directors of crown corporations about salaries, standards, benefits and so on. Basically, the Treasury Board Secretariat can tell directors at the CBC, VIA Rail and Canada Post what they can and cannot negotiate. That takes away the arm's length relationship that defines Canada's crown corporations.

According to another rule set out in Bill C-60, which pertains specifically to negotiations within crown corporations, a Treasury Board Secretariat employee—a federal government employee—can sit alongside directors at the negotiating table.

Government Orders

What happened to the crown corporation's independence and ability to manage its own affairs? Yes, it is accountable to the government for its performance, but the government must not interfere with crown corporations in this way. I did a quick calculation, which is very telling.

When we ask the Minister of State for Transport questions about Canada Post or VIA Rail, he always says that nothing can be done because they are at arm's length from the government. Since the 2011 election, the Minister of State for Transport has refused to answer questions in the House on 22 occasions and has stated that crown corporations make their own decisions and are responsible for them.

In a recent statement made on April 19, he said:

● (1145)

[*English*]

Mr. Speaker, Canada Post will respect the Supreme Court's decision on pay equity and implement the ruling as soon as possible.

As members know, the Crown is at arm's length from the government and is responsible for its own operations, including human resources. The issue the member is referring to is before the courts, and therefore I cannot comment further.

[*Translation*]

About one month ago, the Minister of Canadian Heritage told the committee:

[*English*]

Library and Archives Canada, like the CBC, like our national museums, operates at arm's length. I don't involve myself in their day-to-day decisions.

[*Translation*]

For two years, the ministers have refused to answer questions about crown corporations because they are at arm's length from the government. However, the government is tabling Bill C-60 to directly interfere, quite openly, in the negotiations that are supposed to be conducted by the crown corporation's managers and their employees.

The government is not even trying to hide this. It is obvious that it wants to interfere, create downward pressure on wages, claw back benefits and meet its objectives that it keeps trying to ram down Canadians' throats. We saw the general downward pressure exerted on wages by the temporary foreign worker program and the employment insurance reform. That is absolutely irresponsible.

For all these reasons, the official opposition will have no choice but to strongly oppose Bill C-60. This bill does nothing for job creation, good working conditions and economic growth.

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague and deputy finance critic on his excellent speech. He gave us an in-depth, passionate and informative overview of the issue.

I would like to hear more about the loss of tax credits, especially with respect to credit unions.

What impact will this have on the regions in particular? I know that he represents a primarily rural riding.

How will these co-operatives, which help people with their finances, be affected by this major change?

● (1150)

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, this question is important for several reasons.

However, there will definitely be an impact because the government is saying that the measure will help level the playing field and will eliminate a special advantage credit unions in Quebec had over banks. On the contrary, this measure will put credit unions at a disadvantage.

Credit unions have a specific mandate to operate in small, less profitable communities. That is why private banks no longer do business there. Credit unions provide local services to communities, which are often rural and spread out, and they invest directly in the economy to help stimulate regional growth.

By eliminating this additional deduction, the government is not leveling the playing field between credit unions and banks. It is giving an advantage to the banks, which are not required to invest and operate in small communities. We do not really understand the government's logic here. This measure will be counterproductive.

Unlike their slogan in the 2011 election, "Our region in power", the Conservatives's measures are leaving the regions high and dry.

[*English*]

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton—Leduc, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's speech. I serve with him on the finance committee. I know he is very hard-working, even though we often disagree.

I would like to have him address one aspect of this particular bill, Bill C-60, which deals with infrastructure.

As he knows, many witnesses come before our committee from many municipalities and other individuals from across the country. They came to the government this past year and asked us to index the gas tax fund, which was done in the budget in March and which is being done in this particular piece of legislation. They asked us to do this in order to allow municipalities to address their infrastructure needs across this country, to count on that going forward over a longer period of time so they can in fact use that as a source against which to borrow money to address their infrastructure needs, in addition to other programs that this government has initiated, such as the public-private partnership funding.

Does the member opposite's party in fact support the measure in this bill, in Bill C-60, that would index the gas tax fund?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, things are not always black and white.

In fact, we think some of the measures in the budget implementation bill are attractive. However, we cannot support the budget as a whole.

Government Orders

As the official opposition, the NDP has been asking for additional investments in infrastructure for a long time now. Clearly, those additional investments require funding and the budget has to include measures for that. For instance, we could give the municipalities a chance to have a 10-year plan with initiatives such as the building Canada plan or by extending that plan. Another appropriate measure would be to raise more funds with the gas tax, since we are dealing with specific infrastructure needs.

However, as was discussed at the Standing Committee on Finance this morning, there are problems with the investments. The government actually decided that \$6 billion of the infrastructure budget, meaning 35% of the total amount for the building Canada plan would not be spent. That amount appears in this budget again. The government says that it is a new amount for infrastructure whereas it is in fact the amount that was already earmarked for infrastructure and was not spent. We have a problem with that.

In general, like the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and the Union des municipalités du Québec, we are happy that there is at least a 10-year period, even though we would have liked to have 15 or 20 years. Specific investments will in fact be made to meet the needs of communities. That will not be enough, but at least an effort was made.

• (1155)

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague mentioned that Bill C-60 contains some poison pills, which suggests to us in the Bloc Québécois that a bill does not have to be huge in order to be filled with poison pills.

In particular, my colleague mentioned the government's interference in crown corporations. We had a taste of this—or should I say a bad aftertaste of this—during the most recent labour dispute, the lockout at Canada Post. There are other poison pills, and I would like my colleague to comment on one of them, namely the contentious Canadian Securities Transition Office. The government said that that office was supposed to cease its operations on July 12, 2013. However, under Bill C-60, that office will remain in place.

The Quebec National Assembly has adopted some unanimous motions, whether under the former Liberal government, the current PQ government or any other party present in the National Assembly. Other provinces have also expressed their displeasure at the Minister of Finance's plans to impose a Canada-wide securities regulator in Quebec and other provinces.

I would like to hear what my colleague's position and that of his party are regarding this direct attack by the Conservative government on Quebec's values.

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to answer that question, which is related to the last part of my speech. I did not have time to talk about that issue because I was not given very much time.

Our position is well known. We oppose the government's attempts to create a single national securities regulator. The December 2011 Supreme Court ruling was clear. I would like to quote from that ruling:

The proposed Securities Act represents a comprehensive foray by Parliament into the realm of securities regulation. If validly adopted, it will create a single scheme

governing the trade of securities throughout Canada subject to the oversight of a single national securities regulator.

The Supreme Court's decision was clear, so why is the federal government still pursuing its agenda by maintaining the transition office? I should point out that the federal government has already dumped \$27 million into the project, and that was before the Supreme Court handed down its ruling.

At the Standing Committee on Finance this morning, I asked how much the government has spent since the Supreme Court ruling in an attempt to get around it even though it was clear.

Currently, all of the provinces but Ontario belong to a passport system, which allows for instant accreditation across Canada, except in Ontario. That means that if a person is an accredited stockbroker or portfolio manager in Quebec, or if a company is listed on an exchange, it is automatically accredited in all of the other provinces.

The Canadian government's goal of stronger nationwide regulation can be achieved through organizations, such as the *Autorité des marchés financiers* in Quebec, that work together in Canada. That is what the federal government should be doing.

[*English*]

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I negotiated for the CBC for 25 years. I am well aware of how things are done in that crown corporation, and a number of very serious trades were made over those years in order to protect its pension plan, for example. The government has given hints that it wants to go after some pension plans. It has already gone after the OAS for seniors over 65 and has given very broad hints that it believes pension plans to be too rich. I am very concerned that this is just a smokescreen and, in fact, what it is going to do is order the CBC to start dismantling its pension plan.

Would the member like to comment?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, the President of the Treasury Board has been very clear about his objective to try to equalize social benefits, including pension plans, with those in the private sector. Once again, the government is putting downward pressure on social benefits and on salaries in general.

Since the 2011 election—and likely even before that, but I have only been here for two years—the government has been saying that crown corporations must remain at arm's length. It does not make any sense for the Treasury Board Secretariat to be able to give itself the authority to withdraw offers that were supposedly made by the crown corporation itself, which is in the best position to determine its priorities and direction. This interference is completely unacceptable. Even the Conservatives have been saying that it is unacceptable for two years now, yet they are still going to do it.

Government Orders

• (1200)

[English]

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton—Leduc, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise today to address Bill C-60, economic action plan 2013. I will be splitting my time with the very hard-working member for Brampton West and I look forward to his speech very much.

This is budget implementation act 1. Just for the benefit of those following this debate, I will outline the process at the beginning. Each summer, the finance committee initiates pre-budget hearings to hear from Canadians and organizations from across the country. Last year we heard from approximately 800 organizations and individuals who had input into the pre-budget process. We table our report in Parliament each year in December. The government considers that report and tables its budget, typically in February or March. We tabled it in March this year. It then follows up with two implementation acts, one in the spring, which the government hopes to pass by June, and then one that follows in the fall.

What the budget implementation acts do is take the budget, which was debated for four days this spring and then passed by this Parliament, and then make all the necessary legislative changes to ensure that the budget will in fact be implemented.

This particular bill, Bill C-60, has a number of measures that were included in our budget presented in March.

It would extend for two years the temporary accelerated capital cost allowance for new investments in machinery and equipment by Canadian manufacturers.

It would index the gas tax fund payments to better support job-creating infrastructure in municipalities across Canada. This is something I just asked my colleague across the way about.

It would extend for one year the mineral exploration tax credit for flow-through shares for investors, especially for the junior mining sector in our country.

It would modernize the Investment Canada Act, as announced in December 2012 by the government, to clarify the treatment of proposed investments in Canada by foreign state-owned enterprises and the timeline for national security reviews.

It would provide \$165 million in multi-year support for genomics research through Genome Canada, following up on our research and development agenda.

It would provide \$18 million to the Canadian Youth Business Foundation to help young entrepreneurs grow their firms.

It would provide \$5 million in 2013-14 to Inspire, which is an excellent organization, for post-secondary scholarships and bursaries for first nations and Inuit students.

It would support Canadian families through such measures as promoting adoption by enhancing the adoption expense tax credit to better recognize the cost of adopting a child.

Following up on recommendations from the finance committee with respect to our report on charities, it would introduce a new temporary first-time donor super credit for first-time claimants of a

charitable donations tax credit to encourage all young Canadians to donate to charity.

It would expand tax relief for home care services to better meet the health care needs of Canadians.

It would remove tariffs on imports of baby clothing and certain sports and athletic equipment.

It would provide \$30 million in fiscal year 2013-14 to support the construction of new housing in Nunavut.

It would invest \$20 million in the Nature Conservancy of Canada to continue to preserve ecologically sensitive land.

It would provide \$3 million to the Pallium Foundation of Canada to support training in palliative care for front-line health care providers.

These last two measures, with respect to palliative care and the Nature Conservancy of Canada, I should point out were both brought to members of the finance committee over the last year.

It would commit \$3 million to the Canadian National Institute for the Blind to expand library services for the blind and partially sighted. This, again, was brought to members of the finance committee as well.

It would support veterans and their families by no longer deducting veterans' disability benefits when calculating other select benefits supporting veterans in this manner.

It would streamline the process for approving tax relief for Canadian Armed Forces members and police officers.

We are also very much respecting Canadian taxpayer dollars. We are proposing to improve the fairness of the tax system by eliminating duplication. We are proposing steps to align employee compensation offered by crown corporations with what is available to federal employees.

I want to address a couple of these points in particular. I will start with the accelerated capital cost allowance for new investments in machinery and equipment. This is an extension of a measure that was first put forward by our government in the March 2007 budget. It follows on a report by the industry committee in February 2007. That committee did an intensive six-month study of the manufacturing sector. We travelled across the country. Members of both sides did an excellent job in surveying what the challenges were for that sector.

• (1205)

The committee made 22 unanimous recommendations at that time. The first recommendation was to have an accelerated capital cost allowance. For people who are not aware of all the technicalities, it allows businesses in the manufacturing sector to write off their equipment at a faster rate. It enables them, therefore, to purchase more equipment on a much more expeditious basis to ensure that they are as up to date as possible. This makes them more productive, as they can have the most recent equipment in their shops. Having the most up-to-date equipment is also better from an environmental point of view. It has multiple benefits.

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In the past, the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, led by Jayson Myers, who has done an outstanding job as head of that association and of the Canadian Manufacturing Coalition, has argued that this enables companies to invest in their own productivity.

I see the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health here. He was an instrumental part of that report as well.

This is fundamental to ensuring that our manufacturing sector is competitive. We often hear that manufacturing is sort of a thing of the past. In fact, in Canada, considering the challenges they have had to face in the past, such as a rapidly appreciating dollar, variable energy costs, finding enough skilled and unskilled labour to meet their challenges, and responding to some real challenges from emerging and now emerged economies such as China, the manufacturing sector, in my view, has responded very well, in part because of specific measures like these and some of the other measures in the budget that was presented in March.

The accelerated capital cost allowance was first introduced in March 2007. It has been extended a couple of times, and it is going to be extended in this year's budget. This is an excellent reason for the members opposite, particularly those who have manufacturing bases, to support this particular piece of legislation. I encourage them to take a very good look at that.

The second item I want to spend some time on is the gas tax fund. Municipalities from across Canada have been coming to provincial and federal governments for years, saying that they need a long-term infrastructure plan to address their needs. They cannot go by this variable rate on a year-to-year basis. They are asking for a long-term sustainable plan. They asked, obviously, for gas tax funding.

Every time we, as Canadians, fill up our vehicles, we pay the 10¢-per-litre federal excise tax. Approximately half of that flows into funding, through the federal government, through the provinces, back to municipalities to ensure that it meets their needs. What we are doing is indexing that gas tax fund so that municipalities can not only count on it over the long term but will know how much it is going to be and will know that it will, in fact, be increasing on an annual basis.

This allows municipalities such as Edmonton—Leduc, Devon, Leduc County, in my area, to then borrow against that if they have something large. In Edmonton, light rail transit was expanded in my area. I believe that the City of Edmonton took approximately \$100 million out of gas tax funding and put that money into light rail transit, which I think all parties in this Parliament should support.

Further to that, Edmonton recently announced another extension of their light rail transit system by using the P3 model the government has put in place. That is another excellent model municipalities across the country should look at.

The one-year extension of the mineral exploration tax credit was first put in place in 2000. This credit is sort of like *Groundhog Day*, because it is constantly extended by one year each and every year. This is especially important for the junior mining sector. It is very important for us to realize the importance of the mining sector in Canada.

The largest mining conference every year, the PDAC conference, is held in Toronto. It is an outstanding conference that not only shows the importance of the mining sector but the importance of that sector in relation to our other important sectors, such as the financial services sector.

I will just finish up by talking about investments such as those in Genome Canada. This follows on the government's science and technology strategy. We released our S and T strategy, again going back, in 2007. Following on that report, we have been investing in a number of areas, whether it is in the Canada Foundation for Innovation, Genome Canada, or the research granting councils, which received increased funding in this past budget, as well. That is why organizations such as the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada have strongly endorsed this budget.

I would ask all parliamentarians to endorse the government's initiatives in this budget to support research and development, science and technology and those high-quality jobs of the future in this country.

I look forward to questions from all members in this House.

● (1210)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Edmonton—Leduc for his speech.

We work together on the Standing Committee on Finance, where he does excellent work as chair. As he mentioned, we often disagree when it comes to political and economic issues, but I do not think that it is a stretch to say that he has earned the respect of all the members of the Standing Committee on Finance.

Earlier, before his speech, the hon. member mentioned some issues pertaining to Bill C-60. The NDP is often told that opposing certain government measures will hinder economic growth. However, the hon. member mentioned in his speech that this work could be done in committee. He is familiar with the process, since we follow it in committee.

I would like a confirmation from him. Is it possible for us to support some aspects of the budget but to oppose the budget as a whole? Can he confirm that support for certain budget measures is being expressed in committee?

Some of his colleagues are saying that we are opposing measures that we once supported. Can he ask his colleagues to stop telling the opposite of the truth?

[*English*]

Mr. James Rajotte: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague opposite for his work on the finance committee, and I appreciate his words about my chairmanship. We disagree sometimes on economic and political policy, although I will note that he quoted Milton Friedman this past week in committee, which impressed me, as he has inspired us both in different ways, I suppose.

With respect to the process, obviously what happens here is that at second reading, the vote is on the principle of the bill. I strongly urge the member opposite to look at all of the very good items in this bill and to move it forward to committee.

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With respect to committee, as the member knows very well, we vote clause by clause. If there is a certain clause in the bill members opposite feel they can support, they can vote in favour of that measure. If there is a clause they oppose, for whatever reason, they can vote against that particular clause of the bill.

However, in terms of the overall items, and because of the items I identified in my speech, I would strongly encourage members opposite to vote for increased funding for Genome Canada; increased funding for Indspire, which is a fantastic program for our first nations students; and increased funding for municipalities across the country. These are items that should be supported by members on both sides of the House. That is why I encourage the member to do that.

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Edmonton—Leduc for his great speech. I was a little disappointed that he did not get to give a 20-minute speech, because if he had, I know he would have talked about the excellent improvements for veterans that have been made in this budget implementation act.

I know that the hon. member is a strong supporter of veterans in his area. I am hoping he can expand on what this budget and this implementation act would do to improve services, not only in terms of the pension but also in terms of the burial funding that was previously cut. I am hoping that he can expand on that.

Mr. James Rajotte: Mr. Speaker, I would have loved to have given a 20-minute speech, but the member for Brampton West, I am sure, will top it off and be even better.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak about veterans. This is an area in which the government has made a number of additional investments for veterans, both those from previous wars, who are quite aged, and those from recent engagements such as Afghanistan. They have encountered all sorts of challenges, whether they are challenges with respect to physical health or with respect to mental health. In my view, this government and this minister have made some real strides forward.

With respect to this particular bill, it would support veterans and their families by no longer deducting veterans' disability benefits when calculating other selected benefits. In terms of a specific measure in this bill members on both sides of the House should support, they should definitely support this one. It is another strong argument as to why members should support this particular bill.

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Brampton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour and a privilege to share time with the member for Edmonton—Leduc. I am sure that he would have used these 10 minutes in a fantastic way, and I am honoured that he chose to share them with me so that I can add my comments to this debate.

Before I get into the substance of what I will speak about today, I will hit some of the important highlights. The budget and the budget implementation are key drivers of the economic success of our country, and we have had great economic success in Canada. One of the things that is often talked about by members of my party is the fantastic job creation we have had since the peak of the recession. We have over 900,000 net new jobs. We know that 90% of those jobs are full-time jobs, and 80% of them come from the private sector, which is important. My friends from the New Democratic

Party would like to believe that the way to grow the economy is to hire into the public service, but we believe that private sector jobs are the key drivers of economic growth.

Canada's job creation record since the recession is among the best in the G7. Improvement in employment over the recovery is, in fact, the best in the G7. One key indicator I always look at is our unemployment rate compared to the rate in the United States. Historically, we have had a significantly higher unemployment rate than the United States. Due to the great leadership of our Prime Minister and to our economic action plans, we actually have an unemployment rate that is lower than the rate in the United States, which is significant.

With respect to investment, we have recovered all the business investment lost during the recession, which is also unique among the G7 countries.

Members might feel that this is a bit like *Groundhog Day*, but great minds think alike. The member for Edmonton—Leduc talked about a couple of key points in this budget implementation act. I would like to highlight, again, some of the points he spoke to.

One issue that is very important is the accelerated capital cost allowance for manufacturers. My colleague spoke about that, and I will as well. My riding, which is in the great city of Brampton, has a proud tradition of manufacturing, and these are welcomed programs.

The accelerated capital cost allowance would be extended for an additional two years. It would allow manufacturers to purchase new machinery and equipment and have the cost of those purchases written off over a much shorter period of time. It would allow business people to buy that equipment and machinery, increase their productivity and therefore be more competitive in the increasingly competitive global environment in manufacturing. This has been very well received. The president and CEO of CME, Jayson Myers, said:

The budget recognizes the importance of manufacturing and exporting for each and every Canadian, as an anchor of high-value, high-paying jobs in all parts of the country and across all sectors of the economy.... The business is rapidly changing with new customers, new competitors, new technologies and new skills requirements. This budget will make a real difference in helping our manufacturers and exporters compete and win in global markets.

That is an exceptional program that would help our manufacturers.

Also, with respect to infrastructure, we often hear New Democrats comment that we are not investing in infrastructure. We are not doing enough. We should help cities. Of course, nothing could be further from the truth. We have made significant investments in infrastructure. In fact, they are the largest infrastructure investments in the history of any federal government, with \$53 billion in long-term support. It is composed of \$32.2 billion in the community improvement fund and is sub-composed of an indexed gas fund.

What the New Democrats seem to forget is that it was this government that made the transfer of the gas tax permanent, which was a key ask of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. Now we would index it, which, again, was something municipalities asked for. These would be funds municipalities could count on, year after year, to make investments in the infrastructure needs in their communities.

We have had significant investments in infrastructure in my city of Brampton. We can look at the investment in the AcceleRide program and the investment in the Züm buses, which Bramptonians are very pleased about.

● (1215)

Our mayor was very happy with those investments. I have a quote from the great mayor of Brampton: "I am encouraged by the 2013 federal budget which will help municipalities..."

Of course this came from the FCM itself: "Today's budget delivers significant gains for Canada's cities and communities".

If that is not a ringing endorsement of our budget, I do not know what is.

I also want to talk about one other aspect of the budget, which I consider to be important with respect to the first nations land management. We are going to invest a further \$9 million over two years for the expansion of the FNLMA regime. Why is that important? I sit on the aboriginal affairs committee, and I can say that one of the best ways to unlock the economic potential of first nation communities is to allow them to move at the speed of business, to exempt them from the land code provisions of the Indian Act. That is exactly what the FNLMA does. It allows first nations to enact their own land codes and therefore be able to develop their land and, that great phrase, move at the speed of business, so they can continue to economically prosper.

We believe these additional funds would allow 33 first nations to move into the regime. There are currently 39 that are fully operational, and 30 are in the process of drafting their land codes. This would greatly add to the improvement of the quality of life on first nations.

Quickly, one of the other things I wanted to talk about is with respect to the donor super credit, which is of course going to encourage Canadians to make charitable donations. We know the great work that gets done all across our communities in this country with our charitable organizations. The first-time donor super credit would provide an additional 25% tax credit for a first-time donor, up to \$1,000 in monetary donations. I think this would have an exceptional impact on the giving of Canadians across this country.

It is also important to note the things we would do: the accelerated capital cost allowance; the extension of the mineral exploration tax credits, which my colleague talked about; the investments we are making in infrastructure. All of these things would be done while balancing the budget. We remain on track to balance the budget in 2015-16, and we are going to make sure the budget is balanced, because it is important for Canadians and important for the government, and we would do all the things we are talking about in the budget and still be able to balance it in the coming years.

From my pre-budget consultations, and I also did some post-budget consultations with local businesses in my community, I can say that a number of the things they were looking for are in the budget. I do not have time, but we could talk about the new job training credit, which is being worked on. It is very exciting.

One of the business owners in my riding sent me an email after he had reviewed the budget, and I am going to read what he said

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because I think it is reflective of the general view of small businesses in my community:

Economic Action Plan 2013 builds on the strong foundation the government laid last year, create jobs and economic growth while keeping taxes low and returning to a balanced Budget in 2015. Economic Action Plan 2013 demonstrates to hardworking Canadian families that our Government is committed to their priorities: jobs, growth and long-term prosperity.

That is from Herman Custodio, from Custodio's Studio Inc., which is in beautiful downtown Brampton. He is a great business owner in my local community.

For these reasons, I fully support our budget and, of course, the budget implementation act.

● (1220)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when the government talks about science and technology, it clearly has no credibility.

In fact, last year, the Conservatives cut science and technology funding by 6%. The funding for science and technology in Canada is nothing like the funding provided by other countries and jurisdictions in the world.

Why does the Conservative government insist on closing down research centres that focus on the environment, Canada's north, our waters and rivers? Why does it insist on governing without looking at scientific data?

[*English*]

Mr. Kyle Seeback: Mr. Speaker, I missed this section of my speech when I talked about those kinds of things, but I will answer the question, even though it had nothing to do with what I talked about.

Most of the things the hon. member is saying, in fact all of the things, are not true. My question to her would be this: when she hears the great resounding support for the budget implementation act from local business owners in my riding, local mayors, the FCM, manufacturers and exporters, will she for once support the things that would be good and important for the Canadian economy?

● (1225)

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the member just reproached her for asking a question about something he failed to discuss.

I see that the two government speakers who spoke one after another were very careful to talk only about certain budget measures in Bill C-60, the budget implementation bill.

However, they avoid talking about any measures that are not budget measures and that are in the budget, particularly when it comes to the government's intention to interfere in crown corporations, CBC in particular.

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Since the member did not talk about this in his speech, could he elaborate on what the government is planning to do exactly?

Why does the government want to meddle in negotiations at Canada Post, VIA Rail and CBC? Does it want to take over CBC?

It already has control over Sun News Network. What more does it want? Does it want CBC as well?

I would not have a problem if the government wanted to discuss Don Cherry's contract, but I do have a problem when it wants to meddle in CBC's broadcasting and other operations.

[*English*]

Mr. Kyle Seeback: Mr. Speaker, I prefer to talk about what is in the budget, not what is not in the budget. That is why I am focusing on certain things that are in there.

We want to be good guardians of Canadian taxpayer money and be responsive to taxpayers. We look at those organizations and we want to make sure they are being operated in the most lean and efficient way possible, which responds to the desires of Canadians and taxpayers who want to pay their fair share of tax but not be overtaxed.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am wondering if the hon. member for Brampton West could connect our communities. I am from Oshawa, he is from Brampton West, and we both have a very proud history of manufacturing.

He talked about our colleague from Edmonton—Leduc, with whom I was very proud to serve on the industry committee. We brought in this accelerated capital cost allowance and the importance for manufacturing in this budget.

We have heard from the NDP members, and unfortunately, each and every time we brought a budget in since 2007, they have voted against all these wonderful things we have for manufacturing. They want to filibuster everything, delay everything, and frankly, communities like ours need the things that are in the budget in order to get our economy growing.

The NDP claims to support union jobs and claims to support manufacturers. Could he contrast the things that are in the budget as opposed to, say, the NDP policy and its style of going down to the United States, for example, to lobby against Canadian jobs in the energy sector, which has huge spinoffs for manufacturing in Ontario?

Mr. Kyle Seeback: Mr. Speaker, it is hard to reconcile the seemingly incomprehensible strategy that the NDP puts forward on many of our economic programs, but the member raises a great point about accelerated capital cost allowance.

I have large automotive manufacturing in my riding. I know the hon. member has in his riding as well. These are programs that would be well used by the automobile manufacturing community, because they allow it to invest in new machinery and equipment, improve productivity and be more competitive globally.

That is the issue facing Canadian manufacturers right now. We have an increasingly competitive global environment, and we have to find ways to enable our manufacturers to compete with the most

efficient countries around the world, and that is exactly what the accelerated capital cost allowance would help to do.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by saying that I will share my time with the member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord.

I find it somewhat exasperating to rise once again to express my disapproval at third reading of this omnibus bill. This one is not quite as thick as the others, but even so, this so-called budget implementation bill will change over 50 laws.

The people of LaSalle—Émard are against the omnibus bills that the Conservative government has introduced repeatedly in the House. What is more, it has once again limited debate, as it has done a record number of times since the beginning of this Parliament.

In my remarks today, I will focus primarily on division 6, which is about the Investment Canada Act. Much ink has been and continues to be spilled over this act, particularly in 2012. The largest transaction yet to be reviewed under the Investment Canada Act was the purchase of Canadian oil company Nexen by Chinese state-owned CNOOC.

Many experts have expressed their views on this transaction and on the Investment Canada Act. They have said that the rules were not clear. Throughout the development of that saga in 2012, every time we asked the minister a question, he said that yes, a decision was being made and that yes, the government was going to take net benefit for Canadians into account.

The government waited until December 7, 2012. During a press conference at 4:00 p.m. on a Friday afternoon, the Prime Minister signed off on this major transaction. The interesting thing is that, during the press conference, the Prime Minister said that the government had approved CNOOC's purchase of Nexen, but then he turned around and said he was going to change the rules. That indicates that the government realized such decisions have significant consequences, but approved the transaction anyway. A closer look at the government's measures suggests that it might be aware it made the wrong decision. This is about natural resources in a strategic sector of the Canadian economy, and now a foreign state-owned company controls part of it.

Once again they have hidden away one of the most important laws, the Investment Canada Act, in an omnibus bill. We have been asking the government for a number of years to carry out an in-depth review of this legislation. Instead, the government is making announcements. It has announced two things. During the Prime Minister's press conference, one of the people attending commented on how the takeover of Canadian companies by foreign corporations would be handled. Those rules are in this bill and, what is more, the Minister of Industry is being given the authority to define or decide what rules will apply to foreign state-owned enterprises. That is worrisome.

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The other aspect that I would like to talk about is the increase in the thresholds that trigger the review of these transactions under the Investment Canada Act and the application of the infamous net benefit to Canada test.

•(1230)

The Conservatives are establishing new review thresholds, which will first increase from \$600 million to \$800 million and then to \$1 billion in less than five years. The valuation will no longer be based on asset value but instead on the corporation's market value. With these two factors, fewer and fewer takeovers by foreign corporations will be reviewed under the Investment Canada Act or be subject to the net benefit to Canada test.

This is disturbing because it means that the government is hanging up a big banner across the country that reads “Canada is for sale to the highest bidder”. Even Chris Hadfield will be able to see it from space. That is the government's message.

The NDP recognizes that foreign investment in Canada is important. It stimulates the economy. However, we must understand that some foreign business people and investors see Canada as a pool of talented workers. They come here because they recognize that Canadians are very talented when it comes to innovation and creativity.

They also recognize that Canada has appealing and favourable work conditions. People are treated well here. We have high health, safety and environmental standards. They also recognize the importance of establishing themselves and participating in the community. These foreign investments are a good thing for Canada because they help advance science and technology and improve knowledge sharing.

I have had the opportunity to visit many businesses that are well established here in Canada. They see Canada as a place that supports growth and trade. However, in the last 20 years, a number of businesses have been fair-weather friends. They have come to establish here, have more or less complied with working conditions and then have left. That is my concern, and I demand that we be able to study the Investment Canada Act in committee.

I ask for the unanimous consent of the House to move the following motion: “That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, clauses 136 to 154 regarding the Investment Canada Act be removed from Bill C-60, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 21, 2013 and other measures, and that these clauses do compose Bill C-62; that Bill C-62 be deemed read a first time and be printed; that the order for second reading of the said bill provide for the referral to the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology; that Bill C-60 retain the status on the order paper that it had prior to the adoption of this order; that Bill C-60 be reprinted as amended; and that the law clerk and the parliamentary counsel be authorized to make any technical changes or corrections as may be necessary to give effect to this motion.”

•(1235)

We are moving this motion because we believe that this section of Bill C-60 is very important and complex and should therefore be carefully studied as a separate bill.

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to move the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Questions and comments, the hon. member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord.

[Translation]

Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague, the NDP member for LaSalle—Émard, what she thinks about the fact that the government is scrapping the 15% tax credit for labour-sponsored funds. This tax credit was of great benefit to Quebec savers.

At 163% of disposable income, Canadian household debt has reached unprecedented levels. It is no secret that Canadian families are having a hard time making ends meet and saving.

Families want to use this tax credit to sock away more money for retirement, yet the federal government is scrapping it.

What does she think about that?

•(1240)

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc: Mr. Speaker, it is extremely unfortunate.

We know that these funds are key to stimulating economies throughout Quebec, including in the regions.

The Conservatives do not seem to appreciate this model, because it is democratic, encourages savings and fosters regional development. We know that the Conservatives have abandoned the regions.

This measure is totally counterproductive. It will not stimulate the local economy or Canadian businesses. I am vehemently opposed to this measure.

[English]

Mr. Tyrone Benskin (Jeanne-Le Ber, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my hon. colleague if she could offer her comments in regard to the ham-fisted nature in which the government has interfered with the collective bargaining process of crown corporations.

Through the last two years, we have heard the government say that Canada Post and VIA Rail are arm's-length organizations and it cannot do anything about certain situations, yet it feels it is able to interfere in their collective bargaining processes.

Could the member comment on that?

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for the question.

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This budget implementation bill continues to advance an ideology that is totally opposed to free bargaining between an employer and its employees. The government has said it over and over again. In responding to our questions, the Conservatives have said time and again that these corporations are at arm's length and that the government should not interfere in free bargaining between employers and employees.

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my hon. colleague on her speech.

There are a number of issues that need to be discussed regarding this bill. My colleague already addressed several of them.

However, I also wanted to hear her comments on another topic, one that she has not yet addressed, namely, science and technology. I think this is an important issue. Perhaps she has already addressed this; I cannot say for sure. The government seems to say one thing and do the exact opposite.

Could she comment on the government's attitude and what it is not doing versus what we would have liked to see in the area of science and technology to help our businesses be more innovative?

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for raising this matter, which I am very passionate about. I am talking about both basic and applied science.

Investments in basic science, which this government has neglected, are what make a country a leader in this area. If we are not doing basic research, we will not make any of the basic but important discoveries that will move our country forward. This sector is extremely important, but it is being increasingly neglected by this government.

The other topic has to do with applied science. It is very important to have access to research centres, even within the government, in order to develop public science that belongs to all Canadians, that paints a picture of Canada and that allows us, as parliamentarians and Canadians, to better understand our country and the challenges it faces. For instance, the government took away Statistics Canada's ability to do any research about how much new technology small and medium-sized businesses are adopting.

That is what moves a country forward and that is what an NDP government with long-term vision will bring in 2015.

• (1245)

Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first of all I would like to thank my NDP colleague from LaSalle—Émard for her excellent speech.

Just a few minutes ago, before coming into the House, we were in the lobby discussing my beautiful region, the Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean. I must say that she knows my region very well. If the member for LaSalle—Émard were the minister of industry, I would bet quite a lot of money that my region's economic development would be flourishing in a way that it is not under the current Conservative Minister of Industry.

Today is a special day. I have time to discuss the budget. I think it is very important for members to be able to express themselves in the House. It makes me angry every time the Conservative government decides to silence the NDP members of Parliament. It is important

for our democracy to be able to speak out. I will therefore take advantage of this opportunity, and I treasure the time I have to speak about my beautiful riding and the economic situation there.

Today is May 2. It has now been two years since the people of Chicoutimi—Le Fjord put their faith in me to represent them in Ottawa. I think I am representing their interests quite well, especially when I see what the Conservative government is trying to do to the Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean region. As the member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, I feel that what is happening in my riding is as important to me as what is going on in the riding of Jonquière—Alma and the riding of Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean, the current riding of the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities.

The Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean is a very complex region. It is isolated because of its rural nature. It is one region: Lac-Saint-Jean must help Saguenay, and vice versa. Our ancestors go way back. We are a nation within a nation within a nation; we are closely connected. The same can be said for our economy.

Two years ago, the Conservative government tabled an omnibus bill that took aim at the people of Canada and the people in my riding by implementing a variety of inappropriate tax measures. The same thing happened last year: a monster bill sent a shock wave through Quebec voters, particularly those in my riding. For the past two years, people have been talking about their concerns, about how to make ends meet, how to create jobs, decrease unemployment, and spur regional development. The fact is that society and the world are moving forward, and we do not want to be at the back of the pack. We want Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean to be a strong region in a strong Quebec, within a strong Canada.

This year, unfortunately, I must condemn omnibus bill 3.0 and I will vote against it on behalf of all the people of Chicoutimi—Le Fjord. Once again, the Conservatives have introduced a bill that is inadequate for many reasons. In my short speech, I will list a number of those reasons. I hope the Conservatives on the other side of the House will listen, because I will first talk about the economy and the reality of my riding.

Right now, even though the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities comes from a riding in my region, I do not think the Conservative government really understands my region's socio-economic situation. I do not think this government is putting its energy into developing the region. On the contrary, over the past two years, I have noticed that the Conservative government has been erecting barriers to the development of Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean.

I am the proud representative of one large municipality and eight little ones, including cities and villages. When I go to Saint-Fulgence, which has about 2,000 residents, those people are very concerned about employment insurance. In omnibus bill 3.0, the Conservative government is once again going after workers who rely on certain industries. In Saint-Fulgence, the forestry industry is very important. It is no secret that, since the 2008 recession, Quebec and Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean have had a hard time revitalizing the forestry industry. As a result, the unemployment rate is higher.

Government Orders

Yesterday, during question period, my colleague from Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine mentioned that the youth unemployment rate for Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean is 13.5%, which is very high.

• (1250)

When I see that level of unemployment, it tells me that our young adults and even our young children want to stay in the region. They like our region, which is very nature-oriented. The pace is a little slower than in the big cities. We want to keep our young people. In recent years, the population of our region has been declining. We have been working very hard to turn things around. However, this means that young people must have jobs. At present, with an unemployment rate of 13.5%, it is hard for our young people to find work, especially in Saint-Fulgence, which depends on one particular industry.

I am very disappointed that the government is not putting more energy in the right place in order to help the people of Saint-Fulgence, both youth and adults, find work. The next generation of workers, or at least the young generation of workers, is the future of our region. If they leave, they are giving up the opportunity to raise a family in Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean. It is appalling that my region is declining because of that.

Ferland-Boileau is a municipality that is quite similar to Saint-Fulgence, because the forestry industry is very important there, too. The Conservative government injected 10 times more money into the automotive industry in southern Ontario than it did into the entire Canadian forestry industry, and only a small fraction made its way to Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean. I deplore what is happening, because this government is creating winners and losers.

In the latest budget, omnibus 3.0, the government did not allocate any new funding for the forestry industry, although it tried to claim that it did. Canadians are not the fools that this government seems to think they are.

In Sainte-Rose-du-Nord, a charming town of 500, people are concerned that their small community does not have the financial resources it needs to build a waste water treatment plant. I know that waste water treatment is under provincial jurisdiction, but the problem in my region is that waste water gets dumped into the Saguenay Fjord. I am not sure many people know this, and I am not even sure that government members are aware, but the Saguenay-St. Lawrence Marine Park is co-managed by the provincial and federal governments. That is why the federal government must do its part to protect water and environmental quality within the Saguenay-St. Lawrence Marine Park.

Unfortunately, when small communities like Sainte-Rose-du-Nord dump waste water into that lovely expanse of water, which is protected by the federal and provincial governments, I have to wonder. The government is doing two contradictory things. It is not putting in the effort or coming up with the money that these small communities need to treat their waste water. All they need is a \$5 million waste water treatment plant. The government could do something to support these small communities financially. I am not talking about transferring the gas tax, which is worth \$500,000 over a period of four years, to Sainte-Rose-du-Nord. I have done my homework, so I am not interested in hearing any nonsense. We can all agree that a community with a population of 500 will not be able

to come up with \$4.5 million to build a waste water treatment plant. The government's lack of vision for the development and support of the small communities I represent is deplorable.

Unfortunately, the community of Petit-Saguenay is wasting away. Its population is declining rapidly, as are the revenues that would enable it to recover and thrive. When I talk to elected officials there, they all say that the Government of Canada, specifically Canada Economic Development, is not helping them.

Saint-Félix-d'Otis has a lot of great projects going on, such as the Site de la Nouvelle-France and the transformation of its elementary school into a nature-focused school. Unfortunately, Economic Development Canada is not doing enough.

I wish I had more time to talk about my riding, but I urge the Conservative government to take note of my concerns.

• (1255)

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for taking me again on a tour of the beautiful region that he represents and for highlighting the creativity, the goodwill and the attachment of people who live in rural areas and create vibrant and economically strong communities.

My colleague also pointed out that, over the years, the Conservative government has abandoned the regions. We have proof of that again with this austerity budget, which is not at all a visionary budget and does not seek to support the creativity of the people of the beautiful region of Chicoutimi—Le Fjord.

I wonder if he could elaborate on how the government, in this budget, has completely abandoned some programs set up to help regions and their small businesses.

Mr. Dany Morin: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for giving me the opportunity to comment further on my constituency. The Canada summer jobs initiative is very helpful to small municipalities in my riding.

I spoke to the mayor of Saint-Honoré, who told me that her municipality was lucky because it is among the very few whose population is growing, because an increasing number of young families come to live there.

During the summer, 84 children use the playgrounds. Previously, the Canada summer jobs program provided seven young monitors, but now it only provides two or three. This prevents the municipality from providing a service to its residents. That is a very specific and current example of the importance of programs such as the Canada summer jobs initiative, which help our regions.

[*English*]

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the member to take note of a few things in the budget implementation act that I believe are of benefit not only to his riding and to Quebec but to all of Canada.

I would ask if he is prepared to support and is interested in supporting the program that is going to look for youth entrepreneurs. It is a very important program that I know has had great benefits.

Government Orders

Genome Canada is well known across the country in terms of the very important work it does, as is CNIB in terms of the hub that it will be creating, and I could go on and on about the improvements in veterans' benefits.

How can and how will the member justify to his constituents his voting against all of these very important measures that will help him directly in his riding, as well as help Canadians across the country?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Dany Morin: Mr. Speaker, I find it hypocritical that a Conservative government would claim to be doing good things for the development of my region when that is clearly not the case. The Conservative member said the government wants to support young entrepreneurs.

Here is a very concrete example. A resident of l'Anse-Saint-Jean who was receiving employment insurance benefits told me he wanted to start his own business and become an entrepreneur. Incidentally, I congratulate all the entrepreneurs in my beautiful region who decide to start a business to create wealth and jobs. However, this constituent explained to me that this transition caused him a problem. Indeed, as soon as he declared himself a full-time entrepreneur, they cut his employment insurance benefits, because creating his own job meant he was no longer looking for work. This severely restricted that person's ability to set up his business as a self-employed worker.

The Conservative member made me laugh when she said the government is trying to help young entrepreneurs, because the reality is quite different. Residents of l'Anse-Saint-Jean tell me they want to start a business but cannot do so because the employment insurance program does not provide a transition period that would help them meet their basic needs. These people have a wife and children to support. They need a minimum income to meet the needs of their family and start their business.

• (1300)

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Adler (York Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to rise in the House today to speak in support of Bill C-60, economic action plan 2013 act, no. 1.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Minister of Finance for remaining committed to what matters most to Canadians, and that is jobs, growth and long-term prosperity.

Canada's economic action plan 2013 advances a solid vision with a proven track record. We are the only party with a plan and that plan is working for the Canadian people. Let us look at the evidence.

Before I continue, I would like to mention that I will be splitting my time with the member for Barrie.

Just this week, Statistics Canada announced that Canada's economy grew by 0.3% in February. Over 900,000 net new jobs have been created since the end of the recession in July 2009, the strongest job creation record of any G8 country.

All major global institutions say that Canada is a model of economic leadership. The OECD says that Canada has the most sound economic fundamentals in place for a strong economy for the

next 50 years. We also have the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio of any G8 country.

However, we must remember, and this is a very important point, that Canada is not an island. We are not immune to economic shocks emanating from our global neighbours. Therefore, while the Canadian economy continues to grow and create jobs, the challenges confronting us remain significant and we cannot afford to become complacent.

That is why now, more than ever, we must remain focused and on track. Economic action plan 2013 is a balanced and responsible approach. What we propose is not partisan; it is simply good for Canada and will lead to further growth in our economy and to job creation.

Bill C-60 contains a number of substantive measures to build a stronger economy and create jobs. Some of these include extending for two years the temporary accelerated capital cost allowance; indexing the gas tax fund payments to better support job creating infrastructure in municipalities across Canada; extending for one year the mineral exploration tax credit for flow-through share investors; modernizing the Investment Canada Act to clarify the treatment of proposed investments in Canada by foreign state-owned enterprises, the timeline for national security reviews; and providing \$18 million to the Canadian Youth Business Foundation to help young entrepreneurs grow their firms.

One critical area we are focusing on is Canada's skilled worker shortage. The Canadian Chamber of Commerce has identified the skill shortage as the number one obstacle to success for its members. There are too many jobs that go unfulfilled in Canada because employers cannot find workers with the right skills.

We heard this message time and time again at finance committee. Therefore, our government has taken action. The temporary foreign worker program has been reformed to enable employers to hire foreign workers on a temporary basis to fill immediate skills and labour shortages when, and only when, Canadian citizens and permanent residents are not available to do the job. However, let me be clear. The temporary foreign worker program is designed to ensure that Canadians are given the first crack at available jobs.

Bill C-60 also has a number of proposals to support Canadian families and communities. Some of these are introducing a new, temporary, first-time donor super charity credit for first-time claimants, expanding tax relief for home care services to better meet the health care needs of Canadians and removing tariffs on imports of baby clothing and certain sports and athletic equipment.

I want to take this opportunity to talk a bit about the general preferential tariff. I am proud that the economic action plan would modernize Canada's general preferential tariff regime, which has not been updated substantially since 1974. A lot has changed since the 1970s in the global economy.

Government Orders

Let us consider this. In 1980 the Canadian economy was \$269 billion. It was bigger than China's, bigger than Brazil's and bigger than India's. Why would we continue to administer, virtually unchanged, a foreign aid subsidy program based on what the state of the global economy was in 1970s? We should not.

● (1305)

The GPT was a collective commitment from developed western countries in 1974 to help the economies of the poorest third world countries. The program gave companies from these countries preferential access to the Canadian market. Throughout the years, as some of the poorest countries grew stronger, many in the west modified their list of countries to ensure it properly reflected changing economic realities. In fact, the United States revises its program every two years.

Remember, as I said just a few minutes ago, that in 1980 the Canadian economy was bigger than China's, Brazil's and India's. Compare this to today. The economy of China is \$7.3 trillion, Brazil is \$2.5 trillion, India is \$1.8 trillion, and all have overtaken Canada, which is \$1.7 trillion. If our government does not revise the general preferential tariff with these countries, all three countries will continue to receive the same benefits as the poorest third world countries.

The general preferential tariff is not a free trade program. There is no increased access for Canadian exporters to those preferred countries. In fact, many Canadian companies face hurdles when they try to enter those very markets. That is why our government has been pursuing an aggressive trade strategy, negotiating nine free trade agreements since 2006 and negotiating to open more markets for our goods and diversify our trade. However, we cannot accomplish that by letting an outdated program from the 1970s continue indefinitely.

The recent changes would provide an incentive for many countries to open their markets to Canada, meaning better jobs for Canadians and tariff reductions for Canadian consumers. I recently heard from a business owner in my riding who was having trouble competing with his counterpart in China. He was quite upset that Canada was giving tax breaks on imports from China. He did not seem to think this was fair, and neither do I. I am proud, therefore, that his new budget would graduate countries from the list of developing countries and ensure Canadian companies could better compete so jobs would be created in Canada rather than in China.

I would like to conclude by clearly stating my support for Bill C-60, economic action plan 2013 act, no. 1, which would keep our promise to the generation that made us great but also would invest in the next generation that would make Canada even greater.

I thank the Minister of Finance for his hard work on this budget. The people of York Centre and Canada truly appreciate it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-François Larose (Repentigny, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as if having something so absolutely deplorable were not enough, to add insult to injury, the government is not even letting us debate each item in this very dense and problematic budget.

We are told that we can send the bill to committee where, as the government knows, it has a majority. We are always being muzzled.

Moving a time allocation motion to shorten the debate is another insult.

Since the 1960s, we have been fighting like crazy to prevent foreign takeovers here in Canada. At some point in Quebec, a very large number of private American corporations, for example, controlled the market to their benefit and not ours.

This situation created incredible poverty. People's quality of life, job security and standard of living suffered. We fought to get rid of the problem.

I wonder if my hon. colleague has anything to say about that.

I do not know why he wants to encourage takeovers. We should not sell out, period.

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Adler: Mr. Speaker, it has become patently clear that the opposition really has nothing to say about the substance of the bill, so it resorts to criticism of the process.

When it comes to process, this government has been crystal clear. This government will be sending the bill to various committees for comprehensive study. In fact, at finance committee, we will go through Bill C-60 clause by clause, and the NDP can raise amendments and objections at that point.

This is the old bogey that the NDP and socialists love to bring out, that we are being taken over by American companies or foreign companies. We have heard this from the NDP going back to the 1960s, from the waffle movement within its party, and time and time again it has been proven wrong. It was against the Auto Pact. It was against the free trade agreement. It was against NAFTA. It has been against six free trade agreements that our party has negotiated to create jobs in our country. The NDP does not stand with the Canadian worker.

● (1310)

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the excellent speech by the member for York Centre really highlighted some important features of the budget implementation act no. 1. What I especially appreciated was his talk about the preferential tariffs and how this was a very positive measure.

We hear the NDP regularly say that it supports Canada, it supports jobs and it supports measures. On the other hand, we also hear the NDP argue against these important changes that would really help our manufacturers and create a playing field that would be fairer and would no longer be needed because they were not developing countries.

Mr. Mark Adler: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is on the finance committee and is the very hard-working Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue.

Government Orders

In fact, in budget 2012 the Minister of Finance ad called consultations on the general preferential treatment. In December last year, hundreds of representations were made during that consultative process. I have the list of all the individuals, companies and organizations that made representations. I cannot find one New Democrat on this list. I cannot find one Liberal on this list. Those members seem to be crying crocodile tears. Their job creation strategies are not for Canada. Their job creation strategies are for China.

Mr. Patrick Brown (Barrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to show my support for economic action plan 2013, the budget implementation act. I am pleased to see our government continue to invest in the programs and services that are most important to Canadians.

The impact of Canada's economic health is vital to all Canadians. The economic action plan was initially designed to lead Canada out of the worst recession in generations. The temporary stimulus measures of the economic action plan had their intended effect. The projects created jobs at a time of recession while making investments in local infrastructure that would benefit our communities for years to come, leaving a lasting legacy.

Our agenda has kept Canada's economy on the right path. For instance, we are increasing skills and training support by introducing the new Canada job grant to help more Canadians get high-quality, well-paying jobs. We are also helping businesses succeed by extending the accelerated capital cost allowance to encourage manufacturers to invest in new equipment, extending the hiring credit for small businesses, and making strategic investments in world-class research and innovation.

Through the strong leadership of our Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance, Canada has created over 950,000 net new jobs since July 2009. I am pleased to report that the vast majority are full-time, private sector jobs. That is the best record in the G7.

We have seen Canada maintain its Triple-A credit rating through this period of difficult economic instability and uncertainty. We continue to see Canada with the lowest net debt-to-GDP ratio and the lowest overall tax rate on new business investment in the G7. Moreover, the IMF and the OECD have forecast that Canada is on track to stay near the top of the G7 in economic growth in the years ahead.

I would like to take a closer look at some of the initiatives in the budget and share with the House some information on how this budget would benefit the people of the city of Barrie, whom I have the honour to represent.

Set around Lake Simcoe, Kempenfelt Bay, Barrie's waterfront is one of the most beautiful natural assets we have. It is a major boost to tourism across Simcoe County and all around the province. There is no doubt that the health of Lake Simcoe is vital to our region and to the people who live in the city of Barrie. Unfortunately, in recent years, the presence of zebra mussels has become an increasingly large threat to the lake's well-being. The growing presence of invasive species has continually posed a problem in Lake Simcoe's waters.

Our government has been very committed to making sure that the lake is as healthy as possible. It all started in 2007 when we announced a historic \$30 million cleanup fund, which is a five-year fund from 2007 to 2012. It was going to deal with some of the concerns over rising phosphorus levels, which result in excessive weed growth and a reduction of marine habitat. This fund was very successful in working with stakeholders at reducing the phosphorus levels. In 2013, this fund was extended for another five years with an additional \$29 million.

I would note that, historically, the health of Lake Simcoe has been left to local governments. It took a Conservative government to finally invest in cleaning up the lake. I have to say that it was very well received in our region. The fact that we continue to fund that cleanup has been absolutely terrific.

However, it is not just cleaning up the lake; this budget also deals with the concern of invasive species, as I mentioned. It allocates an additional \$4 million over three years to continue this battle against zebra mussels through the continued enforcement and monitoring of ballast water regulations.

Our government's commitment to protect our natural environment is commendable on many levels. I am pleased to note that younger generations in our region can be confident that they will be able to enjoy Lake Simcoe for years to come.

In furthering this commitment to protect and sustain our precious waters, our government has paid close attention to the depleting water levels, particularly in the upper Great Lakes, including Georgian Bay. I have heard from many of my constituents in and around Barrie that this is a major concern, especially for cottagers. It is not just people living along Georgian Bay; an incredible number of people use the water area. Therefore, I was pleased to see this budget address the concern of lower water levels.

● (1315)

In March 2012 the International Joint Commission received the results of the water levels study. It is great to see that this budget commits to working with the IJC on resolutions and recommendations to deal with this growing concern.

There are also a few more highlights for Barrie in the budget.

We have seen the importance of infrastructure, such as transportation, community centres and water treatment facilities, in our communities. Our government's investment in infrastructure in the Barrie area alone has totalled well over \$100 million since we were elected in 2006. It makes the city much stronger, a much better place to attract business and a healthier place to live. It is great to see that this current economic action plan would enhance that commitment to infrastructure.

Government Orders

The budget would deliver the new building Canada plan, which is a combination of other measures in the budget. It actually is the largest infrastructure program in Canadian history. The building Canada plan would provide stable funding for 10 years and help keep our communities moving with investments in roads, bridges, commuter rail and other aspects of transit. Over the next two years alone we would be investing close to \$10 billion. That is more than the previous government's entire 13 years in office. This plan's three main components include the community improvement fund, the new building Canada fund and the renewed P3 Canada fund to include in total over \$70 billion in federal infrastructure funding, which is just incredible.

The gas tax, a temporary program by the previous government that we have enhanced and made permanent, has a tangible benefit for every community in the country. It means \$7.8 million on an annual basis to the city of Barrie.

Let me speak of some other positive aspects of the budget.

In order to promote the culture of giving in Canada, the 2013 economic action plan proudly increases the federal charitable donations tax credit and introduces a new temporary first-time donor super credit for first-time claimants. I am particularly impressed with this aspect of the budget as it creates an appeal for young Canadians to donate to charity. There are many huge capital campaigns in my community where that is exactly what they are working on, finding new first-time donors, whether it is the hospital expansion, the Georgian College expansion, the new Gilda's building or Hospice Simcoe. This is another great initiative that our Minister of Finance has illustrated.

As Barrie is a growing community, one of our ongoing concerns is jobs, and I think this is pretty common across the country. I very much recognize that this is a budget that focuses on jobs.

Economic action plan 2013 continues to support education and training, helping Canadians be prepared for good, high quality jobs. That is why our government is introducing the Canada job grant. This grant aims to transform the labour market by providing funds for the skills training that many Canadians need. In doing so, it encourages employers to recognize these skills and qualifications in order to fill the jobs of Canada's high demand fields.

In building upon this commitment to job growth, economic action plan 2013 also focuses on creating opportunities for apprentices. Canada is currently facing a shortage of skilled tradespeople that is expected to grow in the future as the population ages. Georgian College in Barrie offers 10 valuable apprenticeship programs alone. Our government responded to the shortage of new tradespeople by creating important new opportunities for apprentices. This would be done through the implementation of various grants and tax credits that would open the doors for apprentices at every stage in their career. I am confident this plan would promote accessibility to the training that Canadians need to find employment.

I realize I am running short on time. I just want to highlight two other aspects of the budget, the first being the importance of the Southern Ontario Economic Development Agency. This agency alone has been absolutely fantastic for job creation; IBM located in Barrie because of it. We have seen expansions to Southmedic Inc.,

the moving of the plant from China to Barrie, the expansion of TNR Doors and the expansion of Wolf Steel Ltd.

In my final 30 seconds there is another aspect of the budget that I want to emphasize. We continue to keep our ironclad investment to universal health care in support for the provinces for health care. We are reaching record levels in funding of the Canada health transfer. It will be nearing \$40 billion by the end of the decade, which is just an astronomical commitment to something that Canadians tremendously value.

Overall, this is a terrific budget for Canadians. I applaud our Minister of Finance for such a fine job.

● (1320)

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am somewhat concerned by the bill's attack on workers. His colleague who spoke before him has a plant in his riding. Our agreements with Europe, which are being touted by the government as the next wave of free trade, could directly threaten those workers in the riding of York Centre where Bombardier has a significant workforce. There is a lot of that stuff going on in Europe. If we are making it easier for these things to come from Europe to Canada, that will directly affect those workers. That is part of what our concern about the bill is: it is attacking workers. It is attacking workers both in terms of taxes and in terms of direct attacks on collective bargaining.

Could the member comment on that?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, I believe this budget supports workers. It supports workers by creating jobs. What workers value and appreciate is an economy that is vibrant with jobs. It would do that through the many investments in apprentices, in innovation and technology. In terms of the connection to free trade, New Democrats have a record of fighting free trade at every stage. In 1988, they said free trade with the U.S. would be horrible. It turns out that it has been a huge net benefit to Canada where we have gained because of that free trade agreement. New Democrats campaigned against NAFTA. It turns out that there has been a huge benefit to Canada.

The NDP does not seem to appreciate the fact that free trade means cheaper goods for consumers and more jobs for Canadians because we have an industrious workforce that is able to compete with the best abroad. I am glad that this is a government that recognizes the value of free trade and how it benefits Canada. History is on our side because every trade agreement that we have signed, and every study complements this, has resulted in a net benefit to Canada.

Government Orders

• (1325)

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, interestingly, the member does not talk about the taxes that have been raised in this budget. On the eve of the budget Conservatives talked about tariffs being lowered on certain items, therefore bringing down the cost of certain items coming into Canada, which would be a benefit to Canadians. At the same time, without telling us and it became disclosed afterward, they were increasing tariffs on hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars of other items.

We know that raising a tariff is designed to keep products out of Canada, provided that those products that we are keeping out are made in Canada, but in this case, from toothbrushes to appliances to school supplies and to bikes, those products are not being made in Canada. Those products are still going to come in, the tariff is going to have to be paid, and when I talked to a bicycle retailer in Guelph last week, he told me the price of bikes is going up because of that tariff.

Would the member talk to us about why there is a nefarious effort to raise hundreds of millions of dollars in taxes, borne by the people who can least afford it, including the middle class?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, this has been the latest argument by the Liberal Party of Canada—that, yes, the Government of Canada should subsidize countries like China and subsidize its goods. Certainly that is not an approach that is in the best interests of Canadians.

In terms of the tariff relief that is offered in the budget, it is a focus on an industry that really does not exist in Canada. That is why we saw the tariff reductions on those goods that represent \$76 million, on items like baby clothing and certain sports and athletic equipment. This would result in lower prices for Canadian families on those specific goods.

I would also say about the budget that because we would not be using large sums of money to subsidize competitors in China as the Liberal Party has suggested, we would be able to invest in things that greatly help Canadians. The budget initiative put \$3 million into the CNIB to help it have a new digital hub to help Canadians who have lost their vision. This budget has so many little investments like that, which would have an enormous local impact. Overall, this is a very measured and very prudent Canadian budget.

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what would this budget do for everyday Canadians?

For families, it would mean dealing with lengthy wait times for surgery or not being able to find a family doctor. For young Canadians, it would mean not being able to find a job or get the training they need to get a job. For commuters, it would mean being stuck in traffic gridlock or on overcrowded buses.

The Conservatives promised to focus on jobs, but instead they are pushing ahead with their job-killing austerity cuts. They are maintaining their fatally flawed temporary foreign workers program that takes jobs away from Canadians and they are hiking taxes on Canadians.

This budget introduced no new measures to create jobs and plays a shell game on infrastructure and skills training funding.

The Conservatives are pushing ahead with \$36 billion in reckless cuts to health care funding. For Canadians who cannot afford home care to begin with, this budget would not help them, nor would it improve caregiver support for families who are struggling to provide personal care service for their loved ones.

There are 240,000 more young people unemployed today than before the recession. All this budget does for youth job creation is reannounce funding for internships. This is hardly an adequate strategy for addressing the very real problem of youth unemployment.

The government would scrap the \$300 million in skills training funding to the provinces in order to give the money to companies on a matching fund basis. It is a shell game, plain and simple.

Instead of addressing Canada's skilled labour shortage, the government has close to half a million temporary foreign workers in Canada while 1.4 million Canadians are out of work. With this fatally flawed immigration policy, the federal government is undermining the labour market, signalling to companies to hire cheap labour overseas to replace Canadian workers.

Banks and insurance companies do so by outsourcing their IT jobs. Airlines lay off Canadian pilots to hire foreign workers. Mining companies bring in workers from overseas, even though there are unemployed miners in Canada. Construction companies do exactly the same. Such short-sighted immigration policy eliminates all incentive for companies to train and hire talent permanently.

This policy also depresses wages, making it harder for working families to get by. Immigrants are nation builders, not just economic units. Canada is built by immigrants, and the way to deal with a labour shortage is to train our young people and bring in immigrants as permanent residents so they can build a future in Canada, establish a family and set down roots in this country, just as many generations of immigrants did before them.

The Conservatives have failed to deliver a comprehensive strategy to deal with our growing skills gap. They have failed to deliver greater educational opportunities to first nations, newcomers, youth and the aging workforce. This budget would provide no additional funding to close the 30% funding gap for students in first nations communities.

On the pension front, Canadians have to wait two years longer to receive benefits under old age security. They now have to wait until age 67, up from 65.

Investing in health care, skills training and opportunities for youth is crucial to the well-being of ordinary Canadians and our economy. We need to do better.

Government Orders

I am splitting my time with the member for York South—Weston.

This budget is a disappointment, not only for Canadians who want reliable and accessible health care and job opportunities but also for those who rely on a car or on public transit to get to work. Canada's cities continue to be mired in gridlock. We are losing \$10 billion in economic productivity every year. The average commute time in the Toronto area is 82 minutes. That is almost as long as a soccer game or preparing and having dinner at home.

• (1330)

Our cities are overwhelmed. They only get 8¢ on every tax dollar collected in Canada and they are experiencing a whopping \$171 billion infrastructure deficit. What does the government do about traffic gridlock, the lack of proper transit and crumbling infrastructure? The answer is, not much.

When it comes to federal investments in roads, bridges and public transit, the budget is a disappointment. Instead of giving communities predictable, long-term and non-partisan funding, they get a net cut in infrastructure investments. The Parliamentary Budget Officer has determined that municipalities will be in fact receiving \$2 billion less each year in 2014 and 2015. This is the hard truth when we compare current federal funding on infrastructure with what is planned going forward. Ten billion dollars less in 10 years is a lot of buses and streetcars not being purchased or replaced, a lot of roads and bridges not fixed and a lot of commuters waiting for subways and light rail in vain.

A slew of programs got cut completely, such as the green infrastructure fund. The government believes there is no need to invest in green technology and no need to make our communities more energy efficient.

The same goes for small-town Canada. There will be no more designated infrastructure money for small towns or rural communities. They will now have to compete with the big cities over less money.

What a deep disappointment it is. For 2014, grant-based infrastructure spending is going down from \$3 billion to \$2 billion. The building Canada fund will be 10% of the size it was last year, from \$1.2 billion a year to \$210 million. Canada's commuters will pay the price for this cut. They will pay for the lack of federal leadership on breaking the gridlock.

However, I am happy that the government also listened somewhat and changed its way, in a small way, after much encouragement from both the New Democrats and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. For years we have been calling for indexing of the gas tax transfer. This vital fund gives cities across Canada a minimum of stable, long-term funding. However, until now, it shrank every year in real terms because of inflation.

Partially indexing the fund to inflation would give cities slightly more secure funding, at least from this source. However, the municipalities would not be getting a nickel more in the next three years because of a very regressive formula.

Let me provide details. For 2013, 2014 and 2015, the municipalities would continue to get only \$2 billion across Canada.

It is only in 2016 that the indexing would go up somewhat and an extra \$100 million would kick in.

However, indexing is only the first step. Now the government needs to get serious about long-term, predictable funding that closes the gap. We need gas tax fund no. 2.

There are some promising signs in the budget, but we need to make it concrete and deliver results to Canada's unemployed youth. Infrastructure spending has to be tied to apprenticeships and training so that a new generation can get good-paying jobs in skilled trades and we can get young Canadians the training and jobs that they need to succeed while we fix our cities.

Much work needs to be done, but if the government gets serious about fixing Canada's crumbling infrastructure and creating jobs, we can turn the budget from a disappointment to an opportunity.

• (1335)

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Trinity—Spadina for her wonderful speech. She has long been a champion of our cities in this country and a much-needed champion and strong voice for greater urban economies and for fixes for the social issues in our cities.

Her speech comes in the context of a missing \$3 billion on the government side, as pointed out by the Auditor General's report. Could the member for Trinity—Spadina comment on how that kind of money could be put to use productively for the cities and the urban economies of our country?

Ms. Olivia Chow: Mr. Speaker, I think the people from the member for Beaches—East York's riding should send out a search party to see if it can find this missing \$3 billion, which is a whole lot of money. It can buy a lot of new streetcars and light rapid transit. It can even build subways.

Our mayor in Toronto kept saying that he wanted subways. He does not have the money to build those subways, but if we can find this \$3 billion, we can begin to build a good comprehensive public transit system in the GTA area and break the gridlock.

Right now, we do not know where that \$3 billion is residing. Perhaps you do, Mr. Speaker.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her very interesting speech, in which she placed a lot of emphasis on transport. I would also like to thank her for her work on this file.

Could she talk about the new infrastructure program, which sounds to me like a bogus announcement? If we do the math, we see that it does not even live up to the government's promises or any requests that were made. In fact, municipalities will end up with less money than before.

Government Orders

Can the hon. member comment on this new program and its impact? Is it really a nice announcement or is it just a smokescreen?

• (1340)

[*English*]

Ms. Olivia Chow: Mr. Speaker, the Parliamentary Budget Officer issued a report two weeks ago in which she notes that the funding in the so-called new infrastructure fund is actually a reprofiling of old funds that have not been spent because a lot of the infrastructure projects have been very slow in getting approval. That is why the municipalities have not received the funds and why the federal government still has a chunk of cash left.

Instead of just transferring that funding as quickly as possible to the municipalities, what the federal government did was take the old money and say that it was a new infrastructure fund, except it is being spread out over a much longer period of time. As a result, the PBO has said that we would be cut by \$2 billion each year. We would have \$2 billion less in municipal transfer of federal funds for infrastructure projects than last year. It would be the same in 2014-15. We would have \$2 billion less compared to the year before.

In the meantime, because the so-called gas tax indexing would not kick in until 2015 and this so-called new funding would really not kick in until after 2015, we would be losing \$4 billion in total in the next two years.

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak to Bill C-60 today, which is yet another salvo in the Conservative attack on working people in this country.

Hon. James Moore: A war on working people, not an attack.

Mr. Mike Sullivan: It is even a war on working people. I thank the minister for making sure I got my terminology correct.

We were given the role of Her Majesty's official opposition two years ago today, and almost immediately the Conservatives began their assault on working people in this country.

Canada Post locked out its workers, and despite being at arm's length from the government, the government not only legislated them back to work, but that legislation included reducing the workers' wages and attacked their pension plan.

Shortly after that, the government went after the workers at Air Canada, twice, legislating them back to work before a strike or lockout even began, again with conditions unfavourable to workers.

Later, the government legislated another private company back to work: Canadian Pacific Railway, a private company. I remind the House that it was not even a public corporation or a crown corporation.

Air Canada then closed its maintenance bases in Winnipeg, Montreal and Toronto. Despite the government's assurance that those bases and those workers would be protected, the jobs are now performed elsewhere, and the Conservative government sat on its hands and did nothing.

Caterpillar closed its Electro-Motive Diesel plant in London, Ontario, after getting a lovely cheque from the Prime Minister during the election campaign. The workers were tossed out and production moved to the U.S.

The U.S. government then loaned money to Iron Ore Company of Canada in Labrador to buy its locomotives in the United States. The U.S. government is loaning money to a Canadian company to buy American. How ironic is that? Again, the Conservatives did not even raise a finger to help the workers. We do not have a buy Canadian policy. Nothing in the budget suggests we should be buying in Canada.

However, the Conservatives had not finished. They attacked working Canadians again by demanding they work an additional two years before retiring. The Prime Minister announced this broken promise in Davos, Switzerland, I guess because he is afraid of facing Canadians on issues as big as that.

Next, the Conservatives attacked workers unlucky enough to need access to the safety net called employment insurance. They have reduced the number of weeks of payment, raised the premiums and put in place new rules that demand workers take jobs that pay up to 30% less and can be up to an hour's drive away. Of course, that 30% less becomes a vicious circle and a downward spiral, because the next time individuals are laid off, they have to take 30% less, and the next time they are laid off, another 30%, until finally they are paying to work.

While workers were trying to fathom those changes, the government made it easier for employers to not hire Canadian workers by easing rules for importing workers from other countries. A staggering 338,000 such workers are in Canada now, in jobs ranging from food service workers in fast food restaurants to airline pilots. Banks are even so bold as to ask the outgoing laid-off staff to train their foreign replacements.

This is not what we should be doing in this country. This is not what we want in a budget, to have Canadian jobs fleeing as fast as we can get them out the door in favour of cheaper foreign labour. That is not how to run this economy, and the Conservative government is running our economy quickly into the ground.

Bill C-377, a government bill in private member's bill clothing, attacks the unions that help support these workers by subjecting those unions to mountains of red tape. So much for being the party of red tape reduction.

Now we have Bill C-60, the next anti-worker salvo in the government's arsenal of weapons aimed at workers in this country. I notice that, as of today, the government is afraid of debating that bill. It has now limited the ability of this House of Commons to actually bring to this House of Commons issues with regard to this bill, in front of every member of this House. Instead, the Conservatives have given us time allocation, which will force the bill to be voted on in four days, after only four days of debate.

There are 60 separate acts of Parliament that will be discussed in only four days.

Government Orders

•(1345)

How on earth are we, as representatives of the people, going to give the proper accounting of how we looked after their interests over the course of the next four days? I stagger to think how we can do it.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport has mused about eliminating the Rand formula, another attack on working people in our country. The Rand formula is a uniquely Canadian solution to the problem of union membership, which was put forth in the 1940s and is a model around the world of how to protect employers and union members, yet the government would perhaps try to attack it.

The Minister of State for Transport has suggested on a number of occasions that the wages at Canada Post are too high. He would attack wages. That is part of the problem we have with the government. Each time we turn around, the government is trying to lessen Canadian wages and expectations of job and wage. Foreign workers are allowed to be paid 15% less than the prevailing Canadian wage, yet we are supposed to think that is a good thing. The government is driving down wages time after time with its policies and formulas, and even this budget would do it again.

How would it do it specifically? It would do it by attacking, through the Treasury Board, the collective bargaining process in crown corporations. Some 49 crown corporations would now have to face the government, supposedly at arm's length, but the arm is in a stranglehold around the neck of the crown corporations and their workers.

By that arm's length now permitting the Treasury Board to determine how much money these crown corporations get, which the government does already, the crown corporations would be faced with trying to make do with what they have. The government has already lowered the budget for VIA Rail. It has lowered the budget for all of the crown corporations, generally, across the system.

Now the government wants to go in and tell the crown corporations how to do business with their workers. It has not consulted with anyone on these changes.

The Treasury Board can apparently change a crown corporation's bargaining mandate at any time in collective bargaining, which could force the employer to engage in regressive bargaining, going backward. That is what the Conservatives seem to want to do. They want to take Canada backward as fast they can and take wages backward to make us compete with low wages in parts of the world with which we have no business trying to compete.

The Treasury Board could dictate that a crown corporation violate countless rules under the Canada Labour Code. We have the Canada Labour Code for a reason. It is to govern the working relationships between federal employers, including crown corporations, and their workers in a manner that everyone can read and understand. Now we have the Treasury Board saying it is going to set different rules and not pay attention to the Canada Labour Code. I do not know if that would survive a court challenge, but it is scary nonetheless.

The Treasury Board can have one of its employees present at bargaining to ensure that the crown corporations follow its dictates.

Not only will the big hand of Big Brother be no longer at arm's length, but it will be right there at the table. Big Brother will be watching as they try to bargain with their employees in a manner that is fair, reasonable and just, which is what we want in this country.

The Treasury Board can also dictate that a crown corporation can change the conditions of employment for a non-union employee at any time. There are laws against that in this country, called the Canada Labour Code, which the members opposite should read one of these times. The Canada Labour Code suggests that it would be tantamount to a constructive dismissal and is illegal. It is illegal here in Canada to constructively dismiss individuals by changing their terms and conditions in a way that they can no longer stand. That would be challengeable under the Canada Labour Code.

The provisions that have come to us in the form of Bill C-60 are, unfortunately for us, just another salvo in the war against the working people in this country.

•(1350)

Mr. Jean-François Larose (Repentigny, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have Electrolux closing in my riding. I approached the Minister of Human Resources, and she made a promise here in the House, which she did not respect, because all we are getting is silence.

My question to the hon. member is this: am I interpreting this in the correct way when I see that high wages and good conditions in jobs are being attacked because we are trying to encourage low-wage jobs, for corporations to be able to get those jobs?

That is what is happening with Electrolux. It is going to the States. Is it the government's strategy to create cheap jobs to get those corporations back to our country?

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Speaker, it would appear that the government's strategy is to lower Canadian wages in any way it can, and lowering Canadian wages is counterintuitive to a government that is expecting growth in the economy. There will not be growth in the economy when, every time we turn around, the majority of working people in this country are told to expect less in the following year, because that will lower tax revenue. That will lower the ability of those individuals to continue to function in society.

In the case of Electrolux in his riding, it is yet another example of the Conservatives having failed to protect Canadian workers in this country through policies and practices, and even a buy Canada policy that would protect Canadian workers.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech and especially for his commitment and dedication to Canadian workers.

I was struck by what he said about the increasing plant closures that are making medium-sized businesses in Canada disappear. We have already lost a number of small businesses, but this government has not implemented policies that would help our businesses expand, cross the so-called valley of death, and develop into medium-sized businesses that would hire more people, provide better working conditions and put down strong roots in Canada.

Statements by Members

Could the hon. member expand on that and explain what the danger is in losing these medium-sized businesses that provide good conditions to our workers?

[English]

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Speaker, it is exactly what people are facing in southern Ontario. They have watched as industry after industry has closed, and nothing is filling the gap. There is no federal policy to try to encourage small and medium-sized businesses to take the place of those large manufacturing businesses. There is nothing in federal policy that looks at the next wave of technologies that will need to be created in the new energy economy. Where is the Conservative help for the new energy businesses? It does not exist in this budget, and it has not existed in previous budgets. All we get is the same old, same old from the government. It thinks the economy will continue to roll along, but it is failing. It is failing in places like southwestern Ontario and other places in Canada as well.

• (1355)

Mr. Jay Aspin (Nipissing—Timiskaming, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Prince Albert.

Since the global economic recession, this government has been putting in place vital economic action plans to get Canadians back to work, invest in infrastructure and regional projects, cut taxes and put more money back into the pockets of hard-working Canadian families and of keep us on track to eliminate the deficit by 2015-16.

The results speak for themselves. While the U.S. continues to flounder and European countries teeter on the brink of bankruptcy, Canada stands as a global leader and model for prudent, effective and responsible fiscal management. Canada's fiscal position is envied globally, and all the major credit rating agencies continue to reaffirm our rock-solid Triple-A credit rating.

None of this is by accident; rather, it is by design. Economic action plan 2013 would further strengthen Canada's fiscal position, the best among the G8. Unlike the \$21 billion job-killing carbon tax and the \$56 billion in spending proposed by the NDP, budget 2013 would keep federal spending in check and Canada on track to balancing the budget by 2015-16, while at the same time putting forward a strategic plan to invest in education and skills training, as well as record investment in infrastructure.

Speaking of our sustained and predictable support of infrastructure, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities said:

By maintaining and extending unprecedented investments in our cities' infrastructure, it will spur growth and job creation while laying the foundation for a more competitive economy.

By renewing critical housing programs, it reaffirms the federal role in addressing the challenges of housing affordability and homelessness.

Speaking of our strategic and innovative approach to skills and job training, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce said:

The skills problem leads our Top Ten list of critical barriers to Canada's competitiveness...It's showing up all across the country, in every industry. We are pleased to see the government is moving to confront it, and to include business directly in the solutions.

The Canadian Home Builders' Association, the Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters and chambers of commerce from coast to coast, and I could go on, the positive reception of budget 2013 is

further indicative of the government's responsible steering of the Canadian economy through this very fragile recovery.

This balanced approach of keeping spending low while maintaining predictable funding for important initiatives has kept the Canadian economy growing. Our budgets have produced growth and 900,000 net new jobs are testimony to this.

I would like to identify and discuss a few measures of the budget implementation bill that are of particular significance to the communities, businesses and peoples of Nipissing—Timiskaming.

The first topic I would like to—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): I must interrupt at this time. The hon. member for Nipissing—Timiskaming will have six minutes remaining when this matter returns to the floor of the House following question period.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

NATIONAL YOUTH ARTS WEEK

Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Oxford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to recognize National Youth Arts Week, a series of week-long events happening across Canada from May 1 to May 7.

National Youth Arts Week was initiated by the Arts Network for Children & Youth, a national non-profit community organization that is based in my riding of Oxford. It is partnering with the Michaëlle Jean Foundation to coordinate events in local communities that encourage and display youth artistic talents.

These events are sure to bring out the very best talent among our youth and support local artists in their endeavours. I look forward to seeing their creativity being displayed for all of Oxford to see and enjoy.

I would like to thank all those involved for their hard work and wish all the participants the best as they share their artwork.

* * *

• (1400)

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, demands on today's youth are heavy. Tuition fees are soaring. Many take out sizeable loans to complete even the most basic post-secondary education. Some try to curb their debt by taking on part-time jobs. As a teacher, I applaud them.

Statements by Members

Victoria Ordu and Ihuoma Amadi, university students from Nigeria studying in Saskatchewan, were doing just that: looking for work part time as they studied. Unbeknownst to them, a job was in violation of their student visa. Ten months ago, deportation orders were issued against these students for making an honest mistake. These students have now missed an entire academic year while in sanctuary at a church.

I join with my New Democrat colleagues here, the Saskatchewan government and university officials in asking the Minister of Public Safety and the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism to send these hard-working students back to school.

* * *

CHARLES KING

Mr. Gordon Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a friend who was also a friend to many in the parliamentary community.

Earlier this week, Ottawa and Canada lost a unique individual when Charles King lost his battle with cancer. He was just 47.

He started as a volunteer here, in a Liberal MP's office, in the early 1980s and served in many roles, eventually moving to the private sector, where he worked for Earncliffe Strategy Group and Shaw Communications.

Charles had many gifts, including a sharp mind and a wicked sense of humour, and he was a faithful friend. It is a tribute to the ability of Charles to span the political divides that I stand here today, noting his passing.

As well as his work, Charles lent his name and his talents to many charitable causes. He enriched the lives of everyone he knew. I am pleased that I called Charles a friend.

I would like to express our sympathies to his wife Kelly and his family.

* * *

FUNDRAISING

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at the age of five, Joshua Morin-Surette of Dorval, became aware of the effects of drought in Africa, more specific, in Kenya.

After doing research, Joshua began to understand the vital need for access to clean and safe drinking water. This prompted Joshua to set up a lemonade stand from which the funds raised, \$240, were given to Suitcases for Africa, a non-profit group in my riding that sponsors development projects in several Kenyan communities.

Encouraged by his success, Joshua resolved to raise enough money to build a well in one of Suitcases for Africa's partner villages.

Joshua's compassion for others living so far away inspired Tom Shadyac, director of the *I Am* documentary film, who offered to fund half of the cost of the well, enough to awaken Joshua's determination, not only to reach his fundraising target of \$2,500, but to surpass it. As of now, a new well is ready to be installed at the medical centre in a remote location in Kenya.

Joshua is a role model not only for young people but for all Canadians.

* * *

CYCLING4DIVERSITY

Mr. Randy Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with World Day for Cultural Diversity coming later this month, I am pleased to rise today to commend the efforts of Cycling4Diversity, a team that combines a passion for cycling with spreading the message of cultural diversity and inclusion. Its motto is "Building bridges with dialogue one city at a time".

Ken Herar from Mission formed this group two years ago with an inaugural ride to Victoria, meeting with groups and community organizations along the way.

Last year, the group made over 40 stops its four-day ride and spoke to thousands of people. The group also met with groups throughout the year to spread the message of inclusion.

This year, from May 21 to May 24, the team will visit 14 cities on its ride from Victoria to Abbotsford, encouraging our communities to be more inclusive in our workplaces, schools and neighbourhoods.

I want to congratulate Ken Herar and Cycling4Diversity on their initiative to foster a spirit of understanding and respect among all Canadians. Their work makes Canada a stronger and better country.

* * *

HOMER SEGUIN

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we lost a labour legend last Friday.

I first met Homer Seguin in 1969 when he was president of Local 6500. He was one of the driving forces behind a workers' day memorial held every year on April 28 for workers killed on the job, which is now recognized in over 80 countries. It was highly symbolic that his death coincided with this year's day of mourning celebrations.

In 1986, Homer and other labour leaders wrote a workers' manifesto. In northeastern Ontario, the regional cancer centre in Sudbury and five workers' health and safety centres in Ontario were only two of the fruits of that manifesto.

He fought passionately for health and safety in workplaces. Homer helped improve working conditions and living standards. He helped expose and correct many occupational diseases in the mining industry. He contributed to the re-greening and cleaning up of the environment in Sudbury.

Homer received an honorary Doctorate of Laws degree from Laurentian University for outstanding lifetime achievements in the field of health, safety and the environment.

May my friend Homer rest in peace.

Statements by Members

●(1405)

ASIAN HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. Chungsen Leung (Willowdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, May is Asian Heritage Month, an opportunity for all Canadians to learn about the history and contribution of Asian Canadians through celebration and festivals that include culinary and cultural exhibitions across Canada.

I am proud to say that my riding of Willowdale is home to several vibrant Asian communities that have historic roots and connections.

There are two important anniversaries this year: the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Canada and the Republic of Korea, also known as South Korea; and the 60th anniversary of the Korean War armistice.

With these two important historic milestones, our Prime Minister has designated 2013 the Year of Korea in Canada. This is also the theme of this year's Asian Heritage Month.

I invite all Canadians to take part in Asian Heritage Month and reflect on the important contributions that Canadians of Asian heritage have made throughout Canadian history.

* * *

VISION HEALTH MONTH

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, May is Vision Health Month. The CNIB is launching a month-long campaign to educate Canadians about vision health and the importance of caring for our eyes.

As demographics change in Canada, the cost of vision loss is going to rise, taking a toll on Canadians. These costs are not limited to vision health care. Canadians who are living with vision loss are twice as likely to suffer from falls and three times as likely to suffer from depression.

Age-related macular degeneration is the leading cause of vision loss, with over one million Canadians having some form of AMD, including individuals within my riding of Kildonan—St. Paul. The number of Canadians who experience vision loss is forecasted to double over the next 20 years.

Congratulations to the CNIB and members who are on Parliament Hill today for making vision health awareness a priority for all Canadians.

Our government supports the CNIB Library, Canada's largest producer of alternative format material.

I encourage all parliamentarians to advocate for this important health issue.

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[Translation]

SPRING CLEANUP IN LASALLE—ÉMARD

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I held my first spring cleanup last Saturday. More than 40 people joined forces to help the environment.

There were students from Sainte-Geneviève school and their parents; youth from the LaSalle Community Comprehensive High School; Raphaël and François-Xavier's mother, father and grandmother, along with many others.

We cleaned up parks, schoolyards, sidewalks and bicycle paths. We talked about the footprint our activities leave on the environment and the need to reduce our consumption.

We saw how the birds and fish are affected by the garbage we leave lying around. My riding runs along the St. Lawrence River.

I would like to thank the Table de développement social de LaSalle, Héritage laurentien, the borough of LaSalle and my team for their invaluable co-operation. It made my first spring cleanup a great success.

Thank you, and here is to the second edition.

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[English]

SPEECH AND HEARING MONTH

Mr. Chris Alexander (Ajax—Pickering, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Canada's speech-language pathologists, audiologists and support personnel as they honour Speech and Hearing Month.

Each year the Canadian Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists dedicates the month of May to raising public awareness about speech, language and hearing disorders in Canada and the professionals who can help.

Too often we take our ability to communicate for granted, especially in this place, yet the ability to speak, hear and be heard is much more central to our lives than most of us realize. Alarming, one in ten Canadians suffers from such disorders.

Throughout the month of May, the more than 6,000 members of the CASLPA will be highlighting the importance of early identification and intervention to overcome disorders which affect speech, language and hearing. Whether working with a child with autism, an adult with a hearing impairment or an elderly person recovering from a stroke, CASLPA's goal is to help people speak well, hear well and live well.

I invite my colleagues in the House to join Canada's speech-language pathologists and audiologists in celebrating Speech and Hearing Month.

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●(1410)

[Translation]

SAGUENAY—LAC-SAINT-JEAN GARAGE EMPLOYEES' UNION

Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for several years now, the number of lockouts occurring across the country has been on the rise and, unfortunately, the situation in Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean is no exception.

Statements by Members

After the lockout ordered by ALR last year, which affected over 750 employees, car dealerships in the region are now doing the same thing. They have kept 450 people out in the streets for over two months now.

Once again, an employer is refusing to negotiate in good faith with the workers who allow its business to thrive. Car dealerships would have the public believe that the unions are asking for the moon. Meanwhile, they are trying to impose working conditions on garage employees that would undo several decades of progress.

What is more, no negotiations have been scheduled to date. At this rate, the situation could go on for a long while yet. This is completely unacceptable.

That is why I am rising today to express my support for the unionized workers of the Syndicat démocratique des employés de garage Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean, who have been forced out into the streets by their employer.

I will be on the picket lines with you tomorrow to show my support in person.

* * *

[English]

CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Bernard Trottier (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to mark a very important anniversary. Two years ago today, Canadians elected a strong, stable, national, majority Conservative government.

Since this time, our government has got the job done for hard-working Canadians. We passed the Safe Streets and Communities Act, making sure our communities are safer and victims are always put first. We amended the wasteful and ineffective long gun registry. We cracked down on immigration fraud. We have abolished the Wheat Board's monopoly.

[Translation]

We made the most ambitious long-term commitment with regard to Canadian infrastructure. We made unprecedented investments in the Coast Guard. We made investments in the Canadian Armed Forces after the Liberal decade of darkness. We strengthened our borders. We announced the construction of a new bridge between Windsor and Detroit and another over the St. Lawrence.

[English]

Finally, we have created hundreds of thousands of jobs for Canadians. Unfortunately, the opposition has opposed these measures. Canadians can be proud that two years ago today, they elected a strong, stable, national Conservative majority government.

* * *

ASIAN HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every year on one Sunday in May, the Chinese community gathers at the Catarqui Cemetery in Kingston to tend to the Chinese gravesites. These include many where the old tombstones are barely legible, just a stone's throw away from the final resting place of Sir John A. Macdonald.

Immigrants from the world over and their descendants and aboriginal people all helped build Canada. Each contributed in their own way.

The month of May marks Asian Heritage Month, a celebration not only of heritage and history but also of Asian Canadians who have made notable contributions. This month we recall not only the Asian Canadian role in building Canada but also the rich cultural inheritance that has shaped our communities.

Embracing diversity is a cornerstone of Canadian values. Asian Heritage Month invites us to recognize the wide range of Asian cultures, ethnicities and religious traditions present here in Canada.

I encourage everyone to participate in celebrations this month as we honour the contributions of Asian Canadians.

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LEADER OF THE LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this week, the new Liberal leader will be in Edmonton trying to wine and dine Albertans. However, I can assure the new Liberal leader that Albertans have not forgotten the distasteful comments he made in November 2010. The Liberal leader said, "Canada isn't doing well right now because it's Albertans who control our community and socio-democratic agenda. It doesn't work."

When the Liberal leader was asked whether Canada and Canadians are better off with Quebecers in power or Albertans, he responded, "I'm a Liberal, so of course I think so, yes. Certainly when we look at the great prime ministers of the 20th century, those that really stood the test of time, they were the MPs from Quebec. ... This country, Canada, it belongs to us."

It is clear to Albertans that he is in over his head.

* * *

● (1415)

[Translation]

NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, two years ago today, the now famous orange crush that left its mark on Canadian political history swept across the country.

In its wake, a record number of my NDP colleagues arrived in Ottawa to finally form an opposition and provide an alternative to Conservative policies that were all too often backed by the Liberals.

My colleagues and I have been working hard to represent and defend the interests of our constituents each and every day.

On a personal note, although I am the youngest member of Parliament in Canadian history, I was elected chair of an important parliamentary committee, a duty that I take just as seriously and fulfill with the same enthusiasm as my duties as member for Sherbrooke.

This contrasts with the record of the Conservatives who set the stage for the F-35 fiasco. In addition, they have lost track of more than \$3 billion for anti-terrorism initiatives and they are also sitting on \$29 billion in uncollected taxes.

Oral Questions

Canadians deserve better. In 2015, they deserve an experienced leader. They deserve a caucus that will take its work seriously and that will manage public affairs well. In 2015, they deserve the NDP.

* * *

[English]

LEADER OF THE NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Rob Anders (Calgary West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today is the second anniversary of our strong, stable, national majority Conservative government. We are two years into our mandate, and I am proud to say that we have kept our promises to cut taxes and have delivered great results. It is clear that we on this side of the House are standing tall for Canadians and their interests.

However, it is unfortunate that we cannot say the same for the leader of the NDP across the way. For example, the leader of the NDP spent his 2011 election campaign advocating for a \$20 billion job-killing carbon tax. He said he has a cap and trade program that will produce billions. Most recently, the leader of the NDP introduced another \$56 billion in reckless spending.

Hard-working Canadians simply cannot afford the risky socialist tax-and-spend policies of the NDP. Canadians entrusted us with their vote two years ago to fight these socialist policies, and that is exactly what we will continue to do.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let us get to the real facts. The Conservatives still cannot tell Canadians where \$3.1 billion in security spending actually went. Treasury Board told an iPolitics reporter yesterday that the money could be in a number of places, maybe in other public security programs or maybe even in border infrastructure. We all remember what happened to border infrastructure money the last time the President of the Treasury Board was involved.

Could the Prime Minister now tell us where this money went, or do we need to start searching Huntsville gazebos for it?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, spending on national security went to national security. If the member opposite does not believe me, she just needs to look at the report of the Auditor General himself. The Auditor General said, "We didn't find anything that gave us cause for concern that the money was used in any way that it should not have been."

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister should go check his facts. In reality, the Conservatives simply do not know what happened to billions of dollars in spending, and they are making up new excuses daily to try to explain this mismanagement.

In opposition the Prime Minister once said, "...one would think that there would be some element of shame from the Liberal Party regarding today's report but there is none whatsoever."

Is the Prime Minister now ready to live up to those words and show some contrition for mishandling \$3 billion in security spending?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, "no misrepresentation whatsoever" were the direct words from the Auditor General at his press conference when he released the report. He said, "We didn't find anything that gave us cause for concern that the money was used in any way that it should not have been."

The money was spent on national security. The Auditor General has made it quite clear.

* * *

SEARCH AND RESCUE

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, why is it that no minister is ever held to account and there are no consequences for those who mismanage billions?

The Conservatives are also playing catch-up on search and rescue today. Apparently they will be borrowing an idea from the NDP and setting up a 30-minute response time, but this does not make up for their decision to close the Kitsilano Coast Guard station or their failure to replace the Buffalo search and rescue aircraft.

When will they do the right thing and reopen the Kitsilano station?

● (1420)

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, time and again we have increased our funding for search and rescue. We purchased new Coast Guard vessels, and the NDP voted against that. We have new Coast Guard hovercraft in Vancouver, and the NDP voted against that.

Just today the Minister of National Defence and the minister of state for national defence announced six new initiatives for search and rescue, including better tracking of aircraft, new funding for search and rescue with satellites and better coordination with local officials and first responders, with the money to make all of this happen.

We are doing exactly what Canadians expect: we are delivering resources and we are delivering the funds. The NDP is doing exactly what we have come to expect: they vote against it.

[Translation]

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today's last-minute press conference does not fix the fundamental problems with search and rescue. There is a huge lack of operational resources.

I am sorry, but a website and some satellites will not rescue someone. Fishers, boaters and mariners need to be able to count on a well-equipped search and rescue service.

Oral Questions

That takes equipment, planes and helicopters. Closing a marine search and rescue centre, like the one in Quebec City, will not help anyone.

When can we expect an announcement about search and rescue equipment?

[*English*]

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us be clear. Canada's search and rescue system is one of the best in the world, and we are taking steps now to improve it.

The measures that we have announced today will continue to improve our ability to prevent unnecessary death and to respond to search and rescue incidents. As was mentioned, we have the first comprehensive quadrennial review of search and rescue involving all of the partners, better tracking of aircraft, an investment of \$16.2 million in new satellite technology, a new system with respect to the Canadian beacon system and an update to the joint rescue centre in Halifax.

All of these steps are welcome news for our SAR techs.

* * *

[*Translation*]

GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, responding to the Auditor General's criticisms with a press conference is bad enough, but it gets worse.

The President of the Treasury Board is not convincing anyone with his attempts to explain how he could have lost \$3.1 billion.

The Auditor General was clear: either the money was spent on things that have nothing to do with anti-terrorism initiatives, or else the budget envelope expired and the \$3.1 billion was not spent.

Could the President of the Treasury Board give us a breakdown on the measures that were funded with this \$3.1 billion?

[*English*]

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will again cite, as we have cited, the Auditor General's own words. This is what he said on Tuesday: "We didn't find anything that gave us cause for concern that the money was used in any way that it should not have been".

[*Translation*]

This chapter has to do with the categorization of expenses by the Treasury Board between 2001 and 2009. All of the money in question is accounted for in the public documents tabled in Parliament, including the public accounts.

* * *

[*English*]

TAXATION

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, close research establishes one thing very clearly; that is that the Conservative Party has been engaged in a stealth campaign over the last several years. They are raising taxes and tariffs by \$10

billion, and they are raising employment insurance premiums between 2010 and 2015 by another \$10 billion. That is 10 and 10: a \$20 billion program.

Why is the Conservative Party hiding this from the Canadian public?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is utterly ridiculous. Of course, under the Liberal government, it was the EI fund that was raided by the Liberals—money taken away from Canadian—and padded their budgets. We know that that is what happened, and we have ended that.

We have brought integrity back into the EI system to ensure that it is there for workers when and where they need it.

With regard to taxes, of course, our government has lowered taxes almost 200 times. The average family of four has \$3,200 more in their pocket than before our government came into office. That is the difference between the Liberals and the Conservatives. It is why they are in third place and why we continue to govern with a strong, steady and stable majority.

• (1425)

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me tell the minister what is ridiculous. In 2010, on March 10, the minister and his government voted to raise taxes by \$729 million. On April 5, 2012, the government voted to raise taxes by \$3.6 billion, and on March 27, 2013, the Conservatives voted to raise taxes by another \$3.3 billion.

That is the math. That is the truth. It is at the back of each budget document. They can look it up themselves. They have to come clean with the Canadian public and admit that, in fact, it is a government that is raising taxes and slowing the economy by stealth. That is what the—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. Minister of Canadian Heritage.

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have lowered taxes in every one of our budgets. Canadians know it, and that is why our government has been re-elected.

With regard to the Canadian economy that the new, old Liberal leader has mentioned here, Stats Canada today has reported that in the month of March, Canada had a trade surplus. By the way, this trade surplus was driven largely by the resource sector. Sorry to the New Democrats; it is not a Dutch disease. It is actually helping the Canadian economy. As a result of that, Canadian exports have jumped over 5%, the biggest increase in two years.

The economy is going in the right direction.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have another question for the minister. It is very clear that Canada is facing an important challenge with respect to the International Civil Aviation Organization in Montreal. My question is the following.

At this time, as we work hard to restore Canada's credibility abroad, why are Conservative MPs and senators pulling Canada out of the Inter-Parliamentary Union? Why are they doing that?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is also clear that Canada has a very good international reputation. Just look at what we are doing in Afghanistan, what we accomplished in Libya, our principled stand on Syria and what we are doing around the world, whether it is with our commitment to free trade or our job protection measures. From all viewpoints, our government is protecting Canada's integrity on the international scene. Our focus is clear and consistent.

* * *

[English]

PRIVACY

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we can see that the Treasury Board president is busy looking under the cushions for the \$3 billion he lost track of, and he does not have time to deal with the fact that the privacy of over a million Canadians was breached. Perhaps the HRSDC minister can explain why, of the 885 privacy breaches in her department, only 62 were reported to the Privacy Commissioner. Common sense dictates that when the privacy of Canadians is compromised, one informs the people affected and the commissioner.

Why did the minister not report these violations to the Privacy Commissioner?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we find any loss of privacy, any loss of Canadians' personal information, any violation that way, to be unacceptable. We have, indeed, taken action as a government to strengthen privacy protections.

I, indeed, have requested a meeting with the Privacy Commissioner. I think there are always ways we can collaborate to find out if there are more things we can do that can further protect the privacy of citizens. We have done so for veterans. We have done so for mandatory reporting of breaches, and we will continue to do so in the future.

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Blanchette (Louis-Hébert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives really should take the risk of identity theft more seriously. The privacy breaches that have occurred at the Department of Public Works and Government Services have affected no fewer than 348,061 people over the past 10 years. This department alone is responsible for one-third of the violations of Canadians' privacy.

Does the Minister of Public Works and Government Services have a plan to stop the privacy leaks that have been occurring in her sieve of a department?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have already said that we are going to work with the Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada to better protect Canadians' privacy. Of course, most of the breaches occurred a number of years ago, but perhaps we can do more in the future.

● (1430)

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Perhaps, Mr. Speaker? Just perhaps? If the minister's personal information had been compromised, he would take this situation seriously. It happened to me. My information was compromised while his government was in office.

I believe that Canadians will be surprised to learn that the privacy breaches at the Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food affect 92,000 people. That is a huge number. The worst part is that the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food remained silent about the whole thing. This loss of Canadians' personal information happened on his watch.

I want to know what his plan is.

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have already said, our government takes the protection of Canadians' privacy very seriously, particularly when it comes to the proper handling of confidential personal information.

As I already said, I am going to meet with the Privacy Commissioner in the near future. Perhaps we can also take other measures in the future.

[English]

Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP): Mr. Speaker, clearly the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food is playing a supporting role today.

Ninety-two thousand people had their private information compromised by the Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food. Clearly, there are problems within the system, yet the minister is still silent. What is he going to do to fix this serious problem within his department? When is he going to stand and give Canadians and farmers who had their information breached some straight answers?

Will the minister stand and respond today, or will he remain silent to farmers across this country who had their private information breached by the government?

Oral Questions

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we take any violation of citizens' personal privacy as a very serious matter. We take it very seriously. That is why I have requested this meeting in the near future with the Privacy Commissioner so that we can go over the improvements that have already been made, but perhaps there may be other things that can be done to better protect people's personal privacy as well. As I mentioned already, we have done so for veterans. We have done so for mandatory reporting of breaches. We have new guidelines, but we always hope for better ways to deal with these issues, and we will do so in the near future.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the fact is, they left over one million Canadians vulnerable to fraud artists, and the minister has no plan. Thanks to Conservative mismanagement, more and more Canadians have been left open to this kind of fraud and lost information. Some departments are seeing breaches every 48 hours. Instead of coming clean with Canadians, they sat on 90% of the breaches.

The minister could not keep track of \$3 billion. He cannot keep the private information of seniors safe. Where is a third-party manager to help him do his job?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am going to make a bold prediction. If I was not meeting with the Privacy Commissioner, he would be the first person standing up and demanding my resignation for not doing so, so the hypocrisy is beyond bounds.

We take this matter very seriously. We know that Canadians expect us to take it seriously, and we are, in fact, doing so. That is why the meeting with the Privacy Commissioner is important. That is why all of the efforts we have made in the past already to protect veterans' privacy and to make sure that there is mandatory reporting and other measures go to our commitment on behalf of Canadian citizens.

* * *

[*Translation*]

SEARCH AND RESCUE

Ms. Annick Papillon (Québec, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when the Conservatives are in trouble, they rush to hold a news conference.

Search and rescue has not been on the Conservatives' list of priorities for far too long. Lives were put at risk because of their failure to act.

Despite today's damage control attempt, the Search and Rescue Volunteer Association of Canada is about to implode, and its president has tried to get hold of the Minister of National Defence on numerous occasions, only to be ignored.

Why has the minister ignored this association that saves lives?

[*English*]

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I did receive one correspondence from this individual. In fact, it was last September that the deputy minister of the Department of National Defence responded in a comprehensive way, pointing

out, as the member would know, that the responsibility for ground search and rescue is at the provincial level, and encouraging him to continue to work with provincial and territorial governments.

We, of course, in undertaking this comprehensive review today, will be reaching out to all stakeholders, looking for ways we can improve the way in which search and rescue is coordinated, and most importantly, making investments in the equipment and the plans and the programs delivered by our brave SAR techs. I take this opportunity to thank them for their incredible service to Canada.

• (1435)

Mr. Ryan Cleary (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister's announcement is clearly too little, too late. The lives of Canadian mariners are still at risk. Under the Conservatives' watch, search and rescue has deteriorated for years—years. Only now are they scrambling to pick up the pieces.

The Search and Rescue Volunteer Association of Canada represents thousands of volunteers. It is now facing collapse, yet the minister did not even bother to respond to calls. Why is the minister giving the cold shoulder to stakeholders? Why is search and rescue such a low priority for the government?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, of course, that is false. We would not be announcing today the comprehensive review, the numerous investments that are ongoing, the commitment to replace fixed-wing SAR and the ongoing efforts to improve and augment across the country what is already the very best, most active, most engaged search and rescue system anywhere in the world.

With respect to this individual, there was a request for further assistance, because the federal government is already investing in this particular program, but we reminded the individual that it is, in fact, a provincial responsibility.

We will continue to work with all groups and stakeholders to improve our terrific search and rescue system across Canada.

* * *

GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES

Mr. Mathieu Ravnat (Pontiac, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Conservative mismanagement is out of control. The President of the Treasury Board failed to protect the privacy of over a million Canadians and lost track of over \$3 billion in security funding. It was not three laptops; it was \$3 billion.

Oral Questions

What was he doing with his time, one might ask? Apparently he was rebranding Government of Canada websites in Conservative Party blue. As if using department websites for political attacks was not enough, Conservatives have lowered the bar even further. Why are they not going after the missing \$3 billion instead of rebranding government websites?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have already answered that. In fact, the Auditor General has already answered the question about the funds in question.

However, let me answer about website colours. I would be happy to do so in the chamber. Apparently, different colours were tested with web specialists, and it was found that blue worked best as a contrast to other aspects of the site, and therefore blue was chosen.

* * *

[Translation]

PRIVACY

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP): Mr. Speaker, while they are rebranding departmental websites in Conservative Party colours, the President of the Treasury Board is unable to protect the privacy of Canadians and has lost track of \$3.1 billion in security spending.

What has he done to fix it? Absolutely nothing. By the way, was the \$3.1 billion spent on changing the colour of the websites?

Instead of playing crass partisan games, why does the minister not protect Canadians' privacy?

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 said, the Auditor General gave an answer about the Treasury Board funds.

As for the question about colour, of course various colours were tested by web experts who determined that blue provided the best contrast in relation to other parts of the site.

* * *

[English]

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with Wind Mobile up for sale and Shaw selling its spectrum to Rogers, we are going to see less competition in the cellphone sector.

The Minister of Industry's only response is to beg for more foreign investment. That is not going to happen under the rules he created last fall. He had a chance to increase competition and expand rural coverage through this fall's spectrum auction, but he failed to do so.

Why should middle-class Canadians have to pay higher cellphone bills because of his incompetence?

● (1440)

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, when asking questions, my colleague should base his questions on the real facts.

Just yesterday, we could see from StatsCan that the average price for wireless consumers dropped by 18% from 2008 when we adopted our policies, which are oriented for more competition, more choices and better rates for consumers.

* * *

[Translation]

TAXATION

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians will pay nearly \$2 billion more this year because of increased EI premiums.

Meanwhile, the Conservatives have closed every youth employment centre in the country. The Conservatives' tariff hikes mean that Canadians will pay more for hundreds of everyday items. At the same time, they have lost the protection of search and rescue centres on both coasts.

Why are the Conservatives forcing middle-class families to pay more taxes while receiving fewer services in return?

[English]

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what we are doing is providing better service to Canadians. We are modernizing systems, making it possible for people to access various government programs online, through the Internet, to complete applications, file taxes.

To do these things online is more efficient, it is more effective, it is more cost-effective and it certainly shows more respect for the taxpayers and their hard-earned tax dollars.

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, small businesses got hit with a \$2.3 billion tax hike in budget 2013.

To help them cope, the Conservatives are slashing the Canada Revenue Agency's business assistance program. The budget will force victims of violent crimes to pay GST on medical records they need for court. Meanwhile the Conservatives have slashed border services programs, like the K-9 units, that help stop guns and drugs at our borders.

Why are everyday Canadians being forced to pay higher taxes for fewer of their cherished public services?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite asks about many things. It generally seems to be questions about the economy.

I am sure he is mindful of the fact that earlier this week Statistics Canada announced that Canada's economy grew by 0.3% in January and February, surpassing analysts' expectations.

Oral Questions

With respect to small business, we have long recognized the importance of small business in Canada. That is why, since 2006, we have lowered their tax bill, reducing the small business tax rate from 12% to 11%, which the NDP voted against, increasing the amount of income eligible for the lower small business tax rate from \$300,000 —

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine.

* * *

[*Translation*]

EMPLOYMENT

Ms. Isabelle Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives' rose-coloured glasses definitely do nothing to improve the future of young people. Young people of my generation are struggling with crippling debts. Their purchasing power is constantly declining, and the unemployment rate is reaching levels comparable with those of 2008, in the middle of the recession.

Not only did the so-called measures that were announced fail, but the Conservatives are reducing access to social services and programs and asking young people to pay the price.

When will the government introduce an employment policy for young people that truly meets their needs?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, budget 2013 includes measures to help young people find work, and also internship programs for thousands of trainees. These programs are new initiatives.

The cornerstone of our plan is skills development, so that all Canadians have access to in-demand jobs. The NDP should support this budget if it really wants to help young people find jobs.

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, asking the NDP to support the government's failures is not an action plan.

Instead of providing a concrete plan, the minister keeps blaming the opposition and talking about available internships. Young people want jobs, and the reality is that there are no jobs.

Consider Trois-Rivières. In March 2006, the unemployment rate stood at 7.7%. After seven years of Conservative government, that rate now stands at 15%. It is the same everywhere in Quebec.

Will the minister finally undertake to consult young people and propose a true job creation plan for them?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the cornerstone of budget 2013 is skills development and job creation. If the NDP really wants to help young people find jobs, it should support our budget. I should also mention that Canada has one of the world's lowest youth unemployment rates. That said, a lot remains to be done and we will do it. The NDP should help us.

• (1445)

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are clearly not doing enough for our youth, and they are clearly not doing enough about climate change. They are not doing enough, and the problems are getting worse.

While they wage war with the UN, the World Meteorological Organization is sounding the alarm about record Arctic ice melt last August and September.

The Minister of Natural Resources, with his archaic ideas, believes that global warming of two degrees is not a problem, but young people of my generation totally disagree.

Will the Conservatives take this situation seriously or will they reject the analysis because it comes from the UN?

[*English*]

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I again respond to my colleague that while the NDP proposes a \$21 billion carbon tax that would pick the pockets of Canadians without reducing a single megatonne of GHGs and while NDP members wander abroad attacking Canadian jobs, American jobs and responsible resource development, we have a sector-by-sector regulatory plan, which is working, which is reducing greenhouse gases and which is now halfway toward achieving our 2020 reduction targets.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister's answer was completely irrelevant and irresponsible, particularly considering that Canada is about to take over as chair of the Arctic Council for two years.

The World Meteorological Organization report says that sea ice melt will have disastrous consequences. Sea levels are rising, natural habitats are disappearing and flooding is becoming more common.

Canada is a northern nation, so we absolutely must have a plan to mitigate the impact of climate change on melting Arctic ice.

What strategy will the Conservatives adopt when they take over as chair of the Arctic Council?

[*English*]

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would invite my colleague to visit the north to see exactly how our programs to address the climate change-related problems in the north are being done.

The appointment of the Minister of Health as a dedicated Minister for the Arctic Council, taking the Arctic Council chair rather than the Minister of Foreign Affairs, reflects the importance that our government attaches to the north, to the Arctic Council and to our upcoming chairmanship.

Canada's chairmanship of the Arctic Council, which we assume next month, will put northerners first. Initiatives will reflect the views and the aspirations and concerns of our northern population.

*Oral Questions***CANADIAN HERITAGE**

Mr. Terence Young (Oakville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Canadarm, a marvellous technological innovation created and developed by Canadians is, simply put, a national icon. It was one of the most important inventions of our space industry, one that entrenched Canada's international reputation for its expertise and innovation in advanced robotics.

The robotic arm made its space debut on November 13, 1981, and remained a critical element in the space shuttle program for almost 30 years.

Will the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages please tell this House how our government is recognizing this amazing Canadian invention?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after travelling 624 million kilometres and logging a total of 944 work days in space, the Canadarm has—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. Minister of Canadian Heritage has the floor.

Hon. James Moore: Members opposite can obsess about their caucus mates and we will obsess about Canadian history, Mr. Speaker.

The Canadarm is coming back home. It is now at the science and technology museum.

As we go forward from here to Canada's 150th birthday in 2017, we will honour all of Canada's history.

Today we had the unveiling of the Canadarm at the museum, and we look forward to thousands of Canadians coming through that museum, seeing the Canadarm and seeing its remarkable contribution to Canada's space industry.

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LABOUR

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government has lost track of \$3.1 billion, but instead of putting its own house in order, it is micromanaging crown corporations and interfering in their affairs.

When post offices are closing, crown corporations are—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (1450)

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Yes, Mr. Speaker, remember, arm's length.

However, when CBC is bargaining with its employees, Conservatives want to take over.

Will Conservatives scrap their plan to give themselves new powers to interfere in crown corporations, like VIA Rail, Canada Post or CBC?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, both parts of that question

are completely untrue. I have already cited the Auditor General for the first part of the question.

On the second part of the question, of course, we have as a government the ultimate financial responsibility for crown corporations on behalf of the taxpayers, and we must ensure that their costs are sustainable. This is not a revolutionary idea. Indeed, the NDP leader was part of a provincial government that required political approval for negotiating mandates for crown corporations, including Hydro-Québec, Loto-Québec and Télé-Québec.

This is not revolutionary. The NDP leader was part of a government that did it all the time.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, they are trying to piss off the unions with Bill C-377 and irritate the people at VIA Rail, CBC and Canada Post. They are sticking their noses into the business of all those organizations, but meanwhile they do not even know what they did with \$3 billion. We are not talking about \$1 billion or \$2 billion but \$29 billion in taxes that they are unable to collect. They need to get their own house in order before they start meddling in the affairs of others. When these organizations have problems, the Conservatives say that those problems are not their responsibility and that the organizations are independent, yet, when it comes time to interfere for ideological reasons, these organizations can kiss their independence good-bye. The most ridiculous thing about this situation is that the Conservatives are saying that the bill will help to improve management.

How can a minister who lost \$3 billion claim that the CBC—

The Speaker: The hon. President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario.

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will say it again. The government has the ultimate financial responsibility for crown corporations, and we must ensure that their finances are sustainable. This is not a revolutionary idea. The NDP leader was part of a provincial government that required crown corporations, including Hydro Québec, Loto-Québec and Télé-Québec, to obtain political approval for negotiating mandates. This is nothing new.

* * *

[*English*]

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives' lack of co-operation on the truth and reconciliation process is simply disgraceful, especially after the Auditor General just criticized their mismanagement.

We now learn that the government has refused to admit it purposely destroyed residential school documents. This left many residential school survivors with less compensation, because they could not prove how many years they had spent in school.

Why is the government not living up to the spirit and intent of the 2008 apology and coming clean?

Oral Questions

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member is trying to impute or suggest that this government has destroyed documents, I dare her to put her seat in place and we will take it from there.

The fact of the matter is that we continue to honour and respect the terms of the residential schools settlement agreement that was reached with all parties.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jonathan Genest-Jourdain (Manicouagan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the promise of reconciliation and the official apology made in 2008 increasingly seem to be just empty rhetoric. The Conservatives refuse to admit that the residential school records were deliberately destroyed in the 1960s and 1970s. That is unacceptable.

Why are the Conservatives making the residential school survivors relive their pain because, without records, they were not able to prove how many years they spent in those schools? Will the Conservatives admit that documents were destroyed and will they compensate the victims?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding what the member would have the House and Canadians believe for purely partisan reasons, the fact remains that our government continues to be committed to achieving a fair and lasting settlement regarding the legacy of residential schools.

Last week, in Montreal, I personally met with some of the commissioners. I wanted to make sure that we will continue to work with them to implement the terms of the settlement agreed upon by all parties. That is what we will continue to do.

* * *

• (1455)

[*English*]

ELECTIONS CANADA

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, fair elections are the cornerstone of Canada's democracy, and Elections Canada is our watchdog.

The Conservatives were found guilty of fraud in election 2006. They were accused of fraud in 2008. They are under investigation for fraud in 2011. These election problems are increasing. A new report notes that Elections Canada actually needs more money to deal with this, but the government is slashing its budget instead.

Just what do the Conservatives have to hide?

Hon. Tim Uppal (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have serious concerns over what the Supreme Court called the Liberals' "...attempt to disenfranchise entitled voters and so undermine public confidence in the electoral process". This was regarding the last election.

That member knows very well that Elections Canada has access to unlimited financial resources for elections and investigations. That said, an independent audit highlighted widespread errors in Elections

Canada's operations during the last election. We will bring forward amendments to the law in the not-too-distant future.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a very simple math question for the Minister of the Environment. He keeps falsely claiming that the government is halfway to its 2020 targets on greenhouse gases. Let us do the math.

The 2005 level was 731 megatonnes. His target is 607 megatonnes. Halfway to that is 669 megatonnes. Therefore, the minister is saying that we are at or below 669 megatonnes. Can he provide proof of this?

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with respect to my hon. colleague, this is not rocket science. The math that is important here involves the numbers 13 and 30.

For 13 years, the previous Liberal government paid lip service to climate change, while emissions increased by 30%. I would invite my colleague to visit the Environment Canada website to take a look at our updated emissions inventory, which confirmed that we are now about halfway to achieving our 2020 reduction target.

* * *

[*Translation*]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canada is paying the price for the Conservatives' repeated foreign policy errors.

Qatar is taking advantage of the Conservatives' lack of credibility on the international stage by trying to claim the International Civil Aviation Organization, which is based in Montreal.

If the Conservatives cause this UN organization's headquarters to move, the city will lose a thousand jobs and \$119 million in spinoffs. The city's prestige, reputation and influence are also at risk.

Why should Montreal have to pay for their diplomatic incompetence?

[*English*]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the way Qatar has gone about this demonstrates why it is not a suitable host for this United Nations organization.

I am very pleased. We have reached out to the province and we have reached out to the city. Later today, I will travel to Montreal to launch team Montreal, a group committed to keeping this world-class headquarters in one of the greatest cities in the world. This government is putting aside politics and will work with anyone to ensure we deliver, and ensure that this is maintained in Montreal. It is great for this country, it is great for Quebec, it is great for Montreal, and the member should get on board.

Oral Questions

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, all of this could have been avoided if this minister actually listened to and worked with others. This is a question of either working with other nations on the tough challenges facing the world or taking the minister's approach down the path of isolationism. For example, the minister's recent charm offensive of the Arab world united the region against Canada.

Can he really be trusted to protect our national interests on the global stage?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I had a great visit to the Middle East, especially to five Arab countries. We were warmly welcomed wherever we went. We were able to finally solve a visa issue with the United Arab Emirates. We were there to look at our new embassy in Qatar and to open our new embassy in Jordan.

Of the first five Arab countries that I visited, not one of them mentioned Canada's position on Israel. In fact, the only person who was negative was a CBC reporter.

* * *

• (1500)

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Colin Mayes (Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government has an ambitious pro-trade plan that is delivering jobs, growth and long-term prosperity for Canadians.

Sadly, rather than promote the interests of Canadian exporters, the NDP is advocating for special treatment for manufacturers in countries like China. In fact, the leader of the NDP has said that if given the opportunity, he would repeal agreements that promote trade and increase Canadian exports.

Can the Minister of International Trade please share with this House how, unlike the NDP, our government is standing up for hard-working Canadians?

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Okanagan—Shuswap for that great question and also for his hard work in promoting Canadian interests around the world.

Sadly, the NDP has an appalling record on trade. This is a party whose idea of trade promotion is to lead an anti-trade mission to Washington, D.C., to lobby against Canadian jobs and attack Canada's exporters. Despite the antics of the NDP, our government is delivering for Canadians. Today, Statistics Canada reported that in March, Canada's merchandise exports increased by 5%. While the NDP disparages Canada on the international stage, we are opening up new markets for Canadians.

* * *

TRANSPORT CANADA

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for 62 years the Baddeck Lions Club has operated a ferry service at no charge and provides transportation from Baddeck to Kidston Island. Due to the new Transport Canada guidelines, this vital service will stop operating this year.

I have made many ministers on that front bench aware of this serious situation, but time is running out, not only for Baddeck but for the Cape Breton tourist industry. What is the government's solution to keep this vital ferry service operating?

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, passenger and crew safety aboard vessels is of the utmost importance to Transport Canada. My department is already in touch with this organization and we will very clearly follow this issue and ensure that safety is very strong there.

* * *

TAXATION

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance from Ontario has asked the federal minister to delay the phase-out of the input tax credit regime in Ontario. He has asked that this be extended to 2018. This move by Ontario will have no impact on federal revenues. However, it is part of a new plan by the Ontario government that was requested by the Ontario NDP.

Will the Minister of Finance agree to this reasonable and practical request from the Province of Ontario?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our Conservative government believes in lower taxes. We have shown that by cutting over 150 taxes for the people of Ontario since 2006. We also believe in keeping agreements.

There is a long-standing agreement between the Government of Ontario and the Government of Canada on this issue. We are not going to abrogate that agreement so the Wynne government can hike taxes again on businesses that create jobs in Ontario.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this afternoon we will be debating my motion in support of persons with disabilities having fuller participation in our economy. This morning, the minister and I were joined by representatives from the private sector and disability organizations to show support for this motion and for greater involvement in the private sector for hiring employees and persons with disabilities.

Can the minister please update the House on the government's position on this motion and our efforts to help all Canadians participate in the workforce?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to recognize and thank the member for Brant for all of his hard work on this important issue. This motion is bringing people together to move forward on this very important topic.

Let us face it, Canada is facing a serious skills gap. We need all Canadians to be able to put their skills to work, which is why our government is pleased to support Motion No. 430 and why we are supporting the creation of a Canadian employers' disability forum. We are getting the job done when it helps Canadians with disabilities find a job.

* * *

TRANSPORT CANADA

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the *Chi-Cheemaun* ferry is the anchor for a multi-million-dollar tourist economy on Manitoulin Island and the Bruce Peninsula. However, tomorrow it will not begin its season. The Conservatives will not do the work to make the ferry terminal safe.

While the Conservatives fight Ontario over who should pay the \$300,000 to get the job done, hard-working entrepreneurs are caught in the middle. Why will the Conservatives not spend a few bucks to protect jobs and businesses instead of wasting it on lawyers?

• (1505)

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, we have met our obligation to keep the dock equipment in working order as per the agreement that we have with the Province of Ontario. My department is working in partnership with the province to find a long-term solution to challenges posed by these historically low water levels. For months, my department has encouraged the province to explore modifications to its ferry to facilitate docking.

* * *

[Translation]

HOUSING

Mr. Claude Patry (Jonquière—Alma, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to homelessness, the federal government's actions are cause for concern. In addition to cutting funding, Ottawa wants to impose its "affordable housing" approach, which will force Quebec to give up its expertise and its own programs that meet its needs.

On Tuesday, the National Assembly unanimously condemned Ottawa's attitude and asked that the homelessness strategy be realigned with the current model that respects Quebec's policies.

Instead of leaving organizations and stakeholders scratching their heads, can the minister confirm that she will accommodate Quebec's model and the work of stakeholders in the community?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is very proud to have extended the homelessness program. We also extended the affordable housing program. The At Home program has been very successful across Canada, and we want to extend this program in order to improve the lot of homeless people.

Business of the House

[English]

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of the Hon. June Draude, Minister of Social Services and Minister Responsible for the Status of Women for the Province of Saskatchewan.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

* * *

[Translation]

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of State (Small Business and Tourism), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to rise to ask the hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie to apologize to Canadians and to the members of the House for using unparliamentary language during question period.

I cannot be more specific. I asked him to apologize. I could repeat his unparliamentary language, but he used very vulgar language in the House. I am asking him to apologize immediately.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I sometimes get carried away when we are talking about workers' rights.

I apologize. I withdraw the word. I should have said that the government wants to hassle or pester the unions.

[English]

Hon. John McCallum: Mr. Speaker, I would like to seek the unanimous consent of the House to table this document, which relates to a question asked by the member for Toronto South and which contains information from the government's own budgets, confirming the number of a \$10 billion tax hike.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to table the document?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: I believe the member meant Toronto Centre.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have just been introduced to a new riding in the House of Commons, the riding of Toronto South, which I believe has a somewhat aquatic environment.

Points of Order

This morning the government introduced time allocation on omnibus 3.0. Yesterday, we started debating the 120-odd pages of Bill C-60 and after just two hours of debate, the government thought it was enough and brought in time allocation for the 32nd time in this Parliament's session, more than any government in Canadian history. No wonder the government is afraid of discussion. Just this week, the Auditor General brought to light some problems that were raised by the official opposition and have been for many years now. The marine search and rescue program is falling apart, the temporary foreign worker program is an absolute fiasco and is being abused and more than \$3 billion in taxpayer money has been simply misplaced and misunderstood. There is something seriously wrong.

[*Translation*]

Instead, we have a government that ignores the good advice of the official opposition and Canadians. It imposes its bills without proper debate, tries to solve problems in committee once it realizes that it is on the wrong track, or waits for the courts to strike down its bills because they go against the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Constitution.

It is unbelievable that the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons does not realize that there is a fundamental problem with this approach. It simply does not work.

• (1510)

[*English*]

With the clock ticking on the antidemocratic antics of closure, could the government House leader tell us what he has planned for the remainder of this week and the week to come?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the opposition House leader for his stream-of-consciousness therapy.

Our government, however, is very focused. Our top priority is jobs, growth and long-term prosperity. With that in mind, this afternoon we will continue second reading debate on the cornerstone item of our legislative agenda, which is Bill C-60, the economic action plan 2013 act, no. 1. We will continue this debate tomorrow.

[*Translation*]

Next Monday, May 6, will be the fourth day of second reading debate on this important job creation bill, and Tuesday May 7 will be the fifth and final day.

Once debate is concluded, the House will have an opportunity to vote on the substantive job creation measures in this bill.

On Wednesday, the House will debate Bill S-8, the safe drinking water for first nations act. This will be the fourth time this bill is debated at second reading so it is my hope and expectation that this bill will come to a vote.

[*English*]

With the vote, there will be another clear choice before the House. Members will be voting to allow for national standards for on-reserve drinking water. This is a question of basic equality. I know the opposition voted against equality for women on reserves when it voted against Bill S-2, matrimonial property on reserves, but I hope

they have stopped grasping at excuses to oppose equal treatment for first nations and will now support Bill S-8.

While I am speaking about aboriginal affairs, allow me to take the time to notify the House that I am designating, pursuant to Standing Order 81(4)(a), Thursday, May 9, for consideration in committee of the whole all votes under Indian Affairs and Northern Development in the main estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2014.

On Thursday, we will continue to advance the economic priority of our legislative agenda by debating Bill C-48, the technical tax amendments act, 2012, in the morning. Following question period on Thursday, May 9, we will continue Bill S-9, the nuclear terrorism act at third reading. I understand there is broad support for this bill, so I hope to see it pass swiftly. Then we can move on to other legislation, including: Bill C-49, the Canadian museum of history act; Bill C-51, the safer witnesses act; Bill C-52, the fair rail freight service act; Bill S-10, the prohibiting cluster munitions act; Bill S-12, the incorporation by reference in regulations act; Bill S-13, the coastal fisheries protection act; and Bill S-14, the fighting foreign bribery act.

Finally, Friday, May 10 will be the seventh allotted day, which I understand will be for the NDP.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order while the House leader is busy going about his business.

Two weeks ago I rose on a point of order with regard to a letter referred to by the minister of human resources that she said I wrote in support of a temporary foreign worker application. Having had an opportunity to go back and check my files twice now, I can find no such letter.

When I rose on the point of order, the House leader had assured the House that he would address the situation and bring an answer back to the House. It has been two weeks since I rose on this point. I would ask that he update the House on this or present the letter.

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to provide an update. I did in fact raise the issue and did see the letter. Therefore, it is true that such a letter was produced by the hon. member and he did send it to the minister or the government asking to have additional temporary foreign workers in his constituency.

I will ensure that you, Mr. Speaker, do get a follow-up from the minister on that question. I know he wants to see that letter, and apparently there is a problem with record-keeping in his office. We will try to help.

INTERNATIONAL CIVIL AVIATION ORGANIZATION

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there have been consultations and I believe you would find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

[*Translation*]

That this House express its strong belief that the city of Montreal is and should remain the rightful host of the International Civil Aviation Organization; recognizes the immense economic benefits the Organization provides, including over one thousand jobs and more than \$100 million each year; appreciates the value and contributions of the aerospace industry to the Greater Montreal Region; and that this House fully endorses all efforts by the government of Canada, in cooperation with the province of Québec and the City of Montreal, to ensure that ICAO's headquarters remains in that world-class city, where it belongs, now and into the future.

• (1515)

[*English*]

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

ECONOMIC ACTION PLAN 2013 ACT, NO. 1

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-60, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 21, 2013 and other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Nipissing—Timiskaming has six minutes left to conclude his remarks.

Mr. Jay Aspin (Nipissing—Timiskaming, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, I would like to identify and discuss a few measures in the budget implementation bill that are of particular significance to the communities, businesses and people of Nipissing—Timiskaming.

The first topic I would like to discuss is that of the manufacturing sector. My constituency is home to several leaders in the manufacturing of mining equipment and technologies that provide many high-paying jobs to our local economy. When these companies grow, it is the local communities that benefit.

During this fragile economic recovery, it is important to ensure we support manufacturers. To provide support for investment in machinery and equipment for the manufacturing and processing sector, the budget implementation bill outlines in greater detail how the government will extend the temporary accelerated capital cost allowance for an additional two years to include investment in eligible equipment in 2014-15. This will provide the manufacturing and processing businesses in Ontario approximately \$562 million in tax relief to grow their companies and create jobs. This tax break for

Government Orders

new manufacturing machinery and equipment will help reduce costs for businesses, like those in my riding, meaning they can invest more in additional production and employees.

This will help them grow. It will help Nipissing—Timiskaming grow. It will help Canada grow.

The Canadian Auto Workers Union president, Ken Lewenza, commented, “The future of Canadian prosperity is tied to a vibrant manufacturing sector...These funding announcements are crucial...”.

This budget further assists Canadian manufacturers and other sectors by levelling the playing field through the modernization of Canada's general, preferential tariff regime for developing countries.

Manufacturing businesses connected to the mining sector in my constituency will further benefit from Bill C-60 with the introduction of a mineral exploration tax credit for flow-through share investors. The tax credit will help initialize investors to explore and of course subsequently develop new or existing mining sites.

With the Ring of Fire so close to Nipissing—Timiskaming, I am confident in the results this measure will help produce for my constituency and for development across Canada.

Concerning the families and individuals in my constituency, I am pleased with the introduction of yet additional tax relief for Canadians in this budget. The elimination of all tariffs on various items, such as baby clothing and certain sports and athletic equipment, will help put back even more money into the pockets of Canadian families.

This, in addition to the adoption expense tax credit, temporary first-time donor super credit and the expanding tax relief for home care services are also part of budget 2013, is exactly why under this government the typical Canadian family saves over \$3,200 in taxes, \$1,000 of that alone from when we cut the GST from 7% to 6% to 5%.

The opposition parties like to talk about the nasty surprises lurking in Conservative budgets, but Canadians know this is not the case. Canadians know and can rely on this Conservative government to put forward responsive, effective budgets focused on keeping the economy growing, balancing the budget by 2015-16 and, as always, continuing to ensure Canadian families keep more of their hard-earned money.

Another measure of Bill C-60 important to many of my constituents is that of improving veterans' benefits. As many know, my riding is home to CFB 22 Wing and Canada's NORAD base during the Cold War. The military, particularly the air force, has played a predominant and respected role in our communities.

Government Orders

We are proud of our veterans and the distinguished role they play in our communities. Bill C-60 would ensure that additional disability pensions provided for Veterans Affairs to eligible low income veterans would no longer be deducted from them or their survivors under the war veterans allowance.

Canadian veterans have demonstrated exceptional courage and have served Canada with distinction. The government honours their sacrifices by working to ensure their quality of life is continually improved.

This first budget implementation bill will keep Canada on the right track. Canada has one of the strongest fiscal positions, globally, with the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio among G7 countries.

• (1520)

Our unemployment level has continued to be well under that of the U.S., and our economy has expanded for six straight quarters now.

In closing, I call upon the NDP and Liberal Party to rise above party politics and vote in favour of Bill C-60. I call upon them to vote in favour of Canadian jobs, Canadian businesses and Canadian families. Canadians know that this Conservative government is committed to delivering economic growth, jobs and low taxes. Bill C-60 would be yet another part of that. I call upon the opposition to be a part of the solution and not the problem. Bill C-60 would greatly benefit the local economy in my constituency and indeed Canada as a whole. I look forward to their supporting it.

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member speaks about reductions in tariffs, but this budget would increase tariffs by over \$250 million. In fact, overall tax increases would be just over \$10 billion over the next five years, a cumulative increase in taxation.

Therefore, why does the Conservative member not actually admit that his government would increase taxes on middle-class Canadians, not reduce them?

Mr. Jay Aspin: Mr. Speaker, this is actually an update on preferential tariffs. These countries no longer really need these tariffs, and this is a countermeasure to increased competition against Canada. We are updating this measure as part of updating our global measures. It will be, in the long run, a positive measure for Canadians. It is a measure that will create Canadian jobs and ensure our long-term prosperity.

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I very much appreciate the member's speech and I know that he would have been paying attention when the budget bill was introduced. On that day, there was a press conference in the National Press Theatre. I would have expected the press conference to have been held by the Minister of Finance because this is the budget implementation bill, but instead the press conference was actually held by the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism and by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development. One might wonder why.

I suspect it is because the government wanted a photo op with respect to the temporary foreign worker program, because the Conservatives have been hit pretty hard in the media, in this House and by their constituents for their complete mismanagement of that

program. Now, of course, they are touting this bill as being the fix-all and the cure-all for the issue of temporary foreign workers.

If the Conservatives think this issue is so important that they need to highlight in a press conference at the National Press Theatre, would the member agree with me that it is also so important that it deserves a separate study and that therefore we should sever that part of the bill from the rest of the budget implementation act so that it can get the due scrutiny it deserves? Could the member just indicate whether he agrees with the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development about the very critical importance of this program?

• (1525)

Mr. Jay Aspin: Mr. Speaker, I do agree with the member that this is an important component of economic action plan 2013. It is a measure that many businesses have asked us for and a measure that many businesses need. They need skills development in today's world.

We put Canadians first, but we certainly are not in a position to fill all the skills gaps. Therefore, it has a great deal of priority to our government, and I am proud to support it.

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in his comments the hon. member touched on the importance of the mining industry to his community.

I wonder if he might discuss a bit further some of the incentives in this budget with respect to the mining industry and business. As well, could he also comment on the impact that some of the opposition members' comments or suggestions would have on these very well-paying jobs in a sector of the economy that is so important to Canada and to his riding specifically?

Mr. Jay Aspin: Mr. Speaker, mining is very important in our region. In our region alone, there are some 2,000 to 2,500 jobs related to mining.

The manufacturing incentives will be a very positive move. The new training program will also be very positive. Those are two measures that would improve the economy of our region.

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is great to be here this afternoon to explain and highlight to my colleagues some of the items in Bill C-60, the budget implementation act.

When I look at my riding and the province of Saskatchewan and I look at how well Canada is doing compared to the rest of the world, I must say that we are truly blessed people. In contrast to the global recession going on around the world, the province I live in has an unemployment rate of 3.7%. I live in a province that has good health care, good taxation, good policies and good law and order. I live in a great province in a great country. The things contained in budget 2013 will just make it that much better. This country is going to thrive as we go forward.

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We are setting the stage for our kids. Our kids will have even better opportunities and a better quality of life than what we have today, and that is because we are putting the proper platform in place for them to thrive and succeed.

There are lots of things in the budget implementation act that we could talk about, but I am going to talk about the Income Tax Act and the Tax Court of Canada Act and the changes to regulations. A lot of people do not realize some of the nuggets in there that need to be highlighted, and I would like to do that in the time I have to speak about the bill.

First I would like to talk about the adoption expense and tax credit. A lot of couples are looking to adopt a child, but they face many hurdles in order to overcome the fact that they cannot have a child themselves. This measure would allow them to get a tax credit when they go through the process of adopting a child. The adoption expense tax credit would allow them to use some of the expenses they incurred in the adoption process. It would actually become a tax credit. This would make it a bit more affordable for them as they go through the process. This measure should be highlighted, and it is something that I think everyone here in the House of Commons supports.

One of the other things I want to talk about is the first-time donor super credit. Members on the finance committee talked about what we could do to increase charitable donations, and this is a really good incentive plan that would get Canadians to start making charitable donations. The budget includes a 25% additional tax credit of up to \$1,000 for first-time donors.

What a great program. What a great way to get Canadians to donate to good charities, and what a great way to get that money flowing through the economy and helping people who need it by supporting these charities that do great work right across Canada.

Another item that we could talk about is the mineral exploration tax credit, or flow-through shares for investors.

Last year I was in Toronto at the PDAC international convention. I spoke to a lot of mining companies and discussed the challenges they will be facing in upcoming years. We also spoke about what has worked successfully for them in the past. They told me that this program has actually saved their lives. This program enabled them to get the capital they required to develop the mines that Canadians need to see our economy thrive and grow. This tax credit basically allows an investor to take on some of the expenses of the project, and as the project comes into fruition, it can be turned into shares. This is a great, creative way to encourage this industry to grow and expand.

Saskatchewan is known for its agricultural industry. It is also now known for its potash, oil and gas, uranium and gold, and hopefully soon its diamonds. This province has a great mining sector that is expanding. Thanks partly to the mineral exploration tax credit, the sector is expanding even more quickly than it would have otherwise.

Some great farm machinery is built in Saskatchewan. The accelerated depreciation or capital cost allowance allows those manufacturers to buy the equipment they need to build more air seeders, cultivators, sprayers and harrow bars and get that machinery out to farmers, who are doing very well right now, so that they can get their crops in the ground.

Saskatchewan is a little white right now. There is still a lot of snow out there. It is going to be a tough spring for farmers. They are going to have a tough time getting their crops in the ground, so they are going to need those bigger air seeders, those harrow bars and those tools to get their crops in quickly so that they do not lose those crops when the frost arrives in the fall.

That is one thing that manufacturers understand in Saskatchewan, companies like Bourgault Industries, Morris Industries, Conserva Pak Seeding Systems and Seed Hawk. These companies will embrace the program. They will modernize their shop machinery, employ more people because of it and continue to provide first-class, first-rate machinery throughout the world.

• (1530)

If we look at the tax relief for Canadian Forces members and police officers deployed on international missions, that is just the right thing to do. I think most Canadians would agree with that. When we put our folks in harm's way and send them abroad, should they not have some sort of tax benefit or tax relief for doing that? I think we could all agree in this chamber that our forces are deserving of this type of acknowledgement. This is a no-brainer, and it is here in the budget implementation bill. It is just another reason all groups should get together and support this area.

The registered disability savings plan for adult beneficiaries is, again, a small program, but it means a lot. It actually helps Canadian families cope and move forward and help their loved ones who have disabilities.

There are so many other things we could talk about. We could talk about tax relief for Canadian consumers. That hockey helmet and other sports equipment would actually cost less. It would be tax relief for Canadian consumers so that they could actually buy those items at the store at a cheaper price. I think Canadians will respect that.

Our government, since it came into power, has lowered the income tax on Canadian families by some \$3,200. That is after-tax dollars. That is real money they can go out and spend on their families. They can put their kids into different sports events and different cultural and arts events. That is serious money they can utilize.

When I go back to my riding, that is one thing a lot of my constituents talk about. They notice it. They feel it in their back pockets. They know they have a little more cash to spend on their kids, and they express their gratitude for having that amount of money left in their back pockets. Of course, they do not want to see anything that takes it away.

When I was in the riding the last little while, one of the things I noticed, with our 3.7% unemployment rate in Saskatchewan, was that we have a shortage of skilled workers. However, we have a population in the aboriginal community that needs to acquire skills. That is where the skills training program could be such a major factor in the province of Saskatchewan. It could have such a strong benefit for our kids and our aboriginal kids going forward. Here is a program whereby the employer, the provincial government and the federal government get together and provide the financing for an individual to get the skills he or she needs.

Government Orders

If I look at a mechanic at an ag dealership, for example, and a 19-year-old coming out of school, that dealer can now train that person right up to journeyman status over three or four years. People will have skills they will use for the rest of their lives. It is the right thing for us to be involved with. It is the right thing to do, and it is appreciated.

I made an announcement at a science college in Prince Albert, where they are adding the fourth-year journeyman's program. It used to be that when someone went for a journeyman's certificate for electricians, he or she had to go to Moose Jaw for the final year to get journeyman's certification. Now, thanks to our government's funding to SIAST, plus this program, these kids will no longer have to travel to the southern part of the province. They can actually take that training in Prince Albert and be closer to their families and closer to job sites.

There are so many nuggets in the budget. I have touched on just a few. When I look at the budget and the budget implementation bill, I see so many common sense things that are here for Canadians and Canadian families. I cannot see how anyone would actually vote against it. In fact, I just looked at the benefits for families and the \$3,200 each family has had in the past. This is a good budget. This is a good implementation bill.

I encourage the opposition members to actually, as my colleague said before, put away the partisan politics, look at the actual paper sitting in front of them, look at the benefits Canadians and Canadian families are going to receive from this and get behind it. Let us improve it and let us move forward.

• (1535)

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Prince Albert for his comments. He is fellow Prairie folk.

He spoke a bit about giving support to farmers. I just had the privilege of spending some time in Saskatchewan meeting with the growing number of people who are concerned that the government has killed a 75-year-old program called the PFRA. What the government has done is download the responsibility to farmers to be managing hundreds of thousands of hectares of very delicate land that provides habitat for threatened and endangered species. Does he not think it would have been useful to have, as his constituents are calling for, a lengthened time period for our wonderful farmers, growers, ranchers, first nations peoples and conservationists, who are trying to take on this program that was downloaded to them? What does he have to say about the fact that there is nothing in the budget to support their efforts to replace this program that was downloaded to them?

Mr. Randy Hoback: Mr. Speaker, I think the member is a little confused. It is not the PFRA she is talking about. It is probably the pasture program or the Indian Head grow area, where they are growing shrubs and trees and stuff like that.

The agriculture scene in Saskatchewan has changed so much in the last 20 to 25 years. When we grew crops in the 1970s, we had issues with blowing dust and dirt. We did not have no-tillage or crops that were GMO. We did not have the tools we have today to seed into stubble, to do conventional or no-tillage.

When we go to the Prairies now, we do not have the issue of soil erosion because they are seeding straight into stubble. That ground has never been worked up. They are basically spraying it with a little bit of Roundup and 2,4-D, and they are seeding right into it. The farmers can actually grow a crop now on eight or nine inches of rain, when before they needed 15 or 20 inches of rain.

The agronomics that they are improving in the soil is amazing. If we look at the organic factors, they are going up 2%, 3% and 4%. The agronomics have actually been taken out of Saskatchewan and applied in other areas of the world, because they are so much further ahead.

It is important that the government recognize these changes and modify its programs so that they are effective and efficient, not outdated, like some of the programs she has talked about.

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was interested to hear my colleague talk about how good the economic policies of the Conservative government have been for the province of Saskatchewan, where the unemployment rate is 3.7%. The government decimated the economy of my province with the disproportionate civil service cuts and the gutting of employment insurance.

My question relates to the super credit for first-time donors. Here we have a bill that does absolutely nothing for the youth of this country. It does nothing to address the outlandishly high rates of youth unemployment in this country, and the government is patting itself on the back for developing a philanthropic gene among our youth.

I would suggest that for our youth to develop a sense of philanthropy, they would have to have something to give, which would involve having a job. The government has done absolutely nothing in this bill in that respect.

I would like to have my colleague respond to the contradiction in giving a credit for donating money that, under these circumstances, they undoubtedly will not have.

• (1540)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Prince Albert has just a little more than a minute.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Mr. Speaker, I can see the pain the member faces in his province, and it is unfortunate.

When I go to my province, unemployment is 3.7%. When I look at programs like the skills training program that is in the budget, that is going to be utilized by the employers in our province for students and young people so that they can achieve journeyman status and take on the jobs that are high paying. Most of them are unionized jobs. It is a good program, and that is what is in the budget.

If the member is looking for improvements or things to cut, I would tell him to look at the skills training program and tell the youth in his province to take that journeyman status. If they cannot find a job there, because of their provincial government, maybe they can go somewhere else to find a really good-paying job and take advantage of those opportunities in Canada.

The Deputy Speaker: There is a point of order from the hon. member for Hamilton Mountain.

Government Orders

Ms. Chris Charlton: Mr. Speaker, I would like to seek unanimous consent to move the following motion:

That notwithstanding any standing order or usual practice of the House, clauses 161 to 166 related to the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act and the temporary foreign worker program be removed from Bill C-60, an Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 21, 2013 and other measures and do compose Bill C-62; that Bill C-62 be deemed read a first time and be printed; that the order for second reading of the said bill provide for the referral to the standing committee on human resources, skills and social development and the status of persons with disabilities; that Bill C-60 retain the status on the order paper that it had prior to the adoption of this order; that Bill C-60 be reprinted as amended; and that the law clerk and parliamentary counsel be authorized to make any technical changes or corrections as may be necessary to give effect to this motion.

New Democrats are moving this motion because we believe that this section of the omnibus Bill C-60 is extremely important and complex and that it deserves to receive a thorough study as a separate piece of legislation.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the member for Hamilton Mountain have the unanimous consent of the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: There is no unanimous consent. Resuming debate, the hon. member for Kings—Hants.

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I rise today to speak to Bill C-60, the Conservatives' first bill to implement budget 2013, I find it sad to have to remind Canadians that the bill imposes significant, in fact massive, tax hikes on middle-class Canadian families, who are already struggling to make ends meet. This is on top of massive tax increases that were included in the Conservatives' last three budgets. The Conservatives are raising taxes, because they need the money to cover for their waste and mismanagement. Unfortunately, the bill will only increase that wasteful spending by actually increasing the number of bloated ministers' offices, while at the same time cutting vital services middle-class Canadian families need. Finally, the bill does nothing to help young Canadians, who are desperate to find paid work.

As the House has heard, Bill C-60 is an omnibus bill that lumps together a large number of unrelated measures. These measures are being combined into one single bill on which we can vote yes or no. With a bill of this size and scope, with 233 different clauses, after all, it is bound to include some measures that we, in fact, may support.

For example, we are broadly supportive of some of the following measures: removing the deduction on disability benefits from the war veterans allowance; expanding the adoption expense tax credit; introducing a tax credit for first-time donors, although it is ironic that this first-time donor tax credit is not going to be utilized by too many young Canadians, given the fact that most young Canadians are having difficulty even finding jobs and opportunities or making ends meet; combatting tax evasion; extending the capital cost allowance again this year, although we would recommend that the government, instead of extending it for two years, should follow the advice of

Canadian manufacturers and extend it for five years; expanding the GST and HST exemption for home care services; reducing tariffs on baby clothing and sporting equipment; supporting organizations such as Indspire, Canada Youth Business Foundation, Genome Canada, Nature Conservancy of Canada, Pallium Foundation of Canada and the Canadian National Institute for the Blind; providing funding for Nunavut housing; increasing the gas tax by 2% per year; reversing the Conservatives' earlier policy on the temporary foreign worker programs; and correcting the Conservatives' mistakes in terms of earlier changes made to registered disability savings plans when they rammed Bill C-38 through Parliament last year.

Given a chance to vote on some of these measures individually, we might, in fact, vote yes on some of them. Unfortunately, due to the approach taken by the Conservatives with this omnibus legislation, they have lumped some of these more reasonable measures in with massive tax increases on middle-class Canadians.

One measure alone, the proposed change to the dividend tax credit, will raise taxes on small business owners by over \$2.3 billion over the next five years. This massive tax hike will hurt 750,000 Canadians, who will watch their tax bills go up by an average of more than \$3,000 each, and it will put Canadian jobs and small businesses at risk. We cannot take \$2.3 billion out of the economy without it hurting small businesses and hurting job creation in Canada. Remember, this tax hike is on top of the Conservatives' annual increase of EI premiums. Each and every year, the Conservatives increase the amount of money they take out of the economy through EI payroll tax increases by more than \$600 million.

Bill C-60 also raises taxes on credit unions by \$75 million per year. This is a direct attack on rural and small-town Canada, because credit unions play a vital role in the economies of small towns and communities across Canada.

• (1545)

[*Translation*]

The Conservatives seem to have forgotten that the goal of tax breaks for credit unions is to ensure that they can compete with big banks.

[*English*]

The fact is, credit unions are smaller and they face challenges that the big banks do not. That is why the tax deduction for credit unions ensures that only smaller institutions can qualify for this credit.

If the Conservatives believe that the deduction was not being used properly they could have proposed changes to the qualifying rules. It is not fair to punish all credit unions and the Canadians who depend on them by getting rid of this tax deduction altogether.

Government Orders

Bill C-60 also increases other taxes, some that will mean significant price increases for Canadian families and others that would nickel and dime Canadians who are already struggling just to make ends meet. The legislation would add GST or HST to the costs of certain health care services that Canadians already pay out of pocket.

For example, victims of crime would now pay GST or HST on the medical work that they need to establish their case in court, such as X-rays and lab work, which are not cheap to begin with. Bill C-60 would punish these victims by raising the costs of their medical expenses by up to 15%. I cannot understand for the life of me why the Conservative members of Parliament would want to punish victims of crime.

Bill C-60 would not only raise GST and HST on these health care services, it would make these increases retroactive to March 22. Doctors would now need to collect HST from their patients, and they are not sure which of the services would be subject to sales tax. There is a lot of confusion because the government has said that the tax is going up on health care services for non-health care purposes. What exactly does that mean?

Would couples who are struggling with fertility issues now have to pay taxes for certain lab work? Would Canadians have to pay taxes on doctors' notes they need for school or work? Would parents who have a child with special needs now have to pay tax on medical assessments they need in order to get a decision from a school board? Are the Conservatives now placing a tax on mental health services? We do not know.

While the Conservatives were quick to introduce this tax hike on health care services, they have been slow to provide Canadian doctors and their patients with the information they need.

Earlier this week the Canadian Psychological Association wrote to finance committee members asking for clarification. They wrote:

This announcement has created some confusion for psychologists, many of whom are small business owners, regarding which services are and are not HST-exempt. There is some urgency to the need for clarity given that changes outlined in the budget are retroactive to March 21st, 2013. Many of our members have spoken with their accountants but, unfortunately, this has yielded contradictory information and direction.

This type of confusion is the direct result of poorly thought out and hasty decisions brought forward by a government that is desperate to raise taxes and has not done its homework. It is what happens when a government becomes arrogant and refuses to hold public consultations and ignores the very Canadians who are most impacted by government decisions.

There are more tax hikes. Bill C-60 would increase taxes on safety deposit boxes.

Now the Conservatives will want to focus this debate on a few tiny tax decreases in the bill. For instance, they want to focus on tariff reductions for sporting equipment, those tariff reductions that we incidentally would support. However, it was my Liberal colleague, the member for Cape Breton—Canso, who stood in the House last November and demanded that the government remove these tariffs.

While this budget would reduce a few tariffs, it would increase many more. There is a net increase by \$250 million per year in tariff taxes on Canadians. For every \$1 in tariff reductions in this budget, there are \$4 in tariff increases.

It is the Conservatives' tax increases that we do not support. These tax increases, otherwise known as tariff increases, which are import taxes, are a hidden tax on just about everything. Taxes on almost 1,300 different types of products would go up, everything from basic toiletries like toothpaste to home furnishings. The Conservatives would raise taxes on everything, including the kitchen sink. The fact is the import tax on kitchen sinks would more than double as a result of this budget.

● (1550)

The Conservatives have claimed that they are increasing these taxes because they do not want to help Chinese companies. That argument is ridiculous. It is not the Chinese companies that would be paying these taxes. It is middle-class Canadian families who are already struggling to make ends meet.

Second, if the tariff increases were not just simply a naked attempt by the Conservatives to take more money out of hard-working Canadians, then we would also see tax decreases in the budget in order to compensate Canadians.

When we tally it up, budget 2013 includes much more in the way of punishing tax increases than the pittance of tax relief. In fact, we could say there is a thimblefull of tax relief in a sea of tax hikes in this Conservative budget.

If we add up all the tax changes listed on the back of the budget, we would see that there is a net tax increase in every one of the next five years. This year, budget 2013 would impose a net tax increase of \$65 million. Next year it would be a net tax increase of \$615 million.

Over the next five years, the Conservatives' budget 2013 would impose a net tax increase of more than \$3.3 billion. That is \$3.3 billion of money earned by hard-working Canadians that the Conservatives would now be taking out of the economy. It is \$3.3 billion less for Canadian families to spend on food, transportation or mortgage payments. That is on top of the almost \$6.5 billion net increase in taxes imposed in the previous three budgets.

Combined, it is almost \$10 billion in net tax increases on Canadians since budget 2010. That is \$10 billion more that the Conservatives are taking out of the Canadian economy. It is \$10 billion less in the hands of Canadian families and investors.

● (1555)

[*Translation*]

The government can do two things to help create jobs: cut taxes and increase public spending.

[*English*]

In fact, the Conservatives are doing the opposite. They are raising taxes while cutting public investment. It is no wonder that they are not creating enough jobs for young Canadians.

Government Orders

The Parliamentary Budget Officer has forecast that the last two Conservative budgets will kill far more jobs than they create. According to the interim PBO, tax increases and spending measures in budgets 2012 and 2013 would have a net effect of 12,000 fewer jobs this year, 33,000 fewer jobs next year and 67,000 fewer jobs by 2017.

It is little wonder that the Conservatives cannot match the job creation record of the previous Liberal government. Under Prime Ministers Chrétien and Martin, the Liberals consistently lowered taxes and helped create 3.5 million net new jobs in Canada.

Looking at just the last seven years of the Liberal administration, there were over two million net new jobs created. Compare this with the Conservatives. Only 1.3 million net new jobs have been created in the last seven years.

Many Canadians have dropped out of the workforce altogether. A lot of young Canadians are giving up. A lot of young Canadians are working in unpaid internships, and the Conservatives simply have not created the jobs young Canadians need at a time when we have lost a lot of good-paying manufacturing jobs and there have been a lot of Canadians who have gone from full-time jobs to part-time work. That is why Canadian families are falling behind.

Why are the Conservatives, during this time of economic uncertainty and challenge, raising taxes? It is to pay for the Conservatives' wasteful spending and mismanagement of public resources.

In this budget, we get more waste from the Conservatives. Budget 2013 does nothing to curb the Conservatives' addiction to partisan government advertising. Canadians are sick and tired of watching the Conservatives throw their money away on partisan economic action plan ads. We know that these ads are not a good use of taxpayers' money. The Conservatives know that they do not provide good value for the taxpayers.

Last year the government commissioned a poll to see if the economic action plans were working. These are the ads the government took out ostensibly to promote measures in the budget. Here is the result. While 23% of Canadians who saw the ad could remember the phrase, "economic action plan", far fewer Canadians actually knew what the ads were about.

Half as many thought the ads were about Canada or the governing Conservative Party. They did not relate them to the budget at all. While almost 5% of Canadians could remember that the ads included arrows that pointed up, less than 1% of Canadians knew the ads were about the federal budget.

In fact, when the survey went further and asked whether or not it affected the behaviour of Canadians who watched them, 92% said the ads did not affect their behaviour whatsoever. There was no result for them whatsoever as a result of watching these ads. They said that the ads had not provided them with any useful information. Ninety-two per cent of Canadians said that.

Of the people who did something, more than one in five "expressed my disbelief". I am quoting from the actual survey commissioned by the finance department. Apparently, expressing one's disbelief about the economic action plan ads was such a

popular option in the survey that it actually got its own category in the results.

Unfortunately, there is nothing in this legislation that would help wean the Conservatives off this wasteful use of partisan advertising. There is another area of spending that is covered in Bill C-60 that reflects the disconnect between the Conservative priorities and those of Canadian families: the number of parliamentary secretaries and the size of the cabinet.

The bill would not only increase the number of parliamentary secretaries, it would actually add three more cabinet positions to the list of salaried ministers. This means the Prime Minister would continue to increase the size of his cabinet and that these cabinet ministers and their parliamentary secretaries could continue to give pay increases to their Conservative staffers. If we compare this to the plight that an awful lot of young Canadians face today, it would seem that the Conservatives are only interested, in terms of young Canadians, in helping young Conservative staffers, because it seems that they are leaving everyone else out of the equation totally.

In fact, only two measures would really will help young Canadians in this budget overall; well, I would say three.

First is the Canada Youth Business Foundation. I think, broadly, that investment is a positive investment. It is not nearly enough. There is so much more that needs to be done to foster entrepreneurialism in Canada.

Second, one could argue that expanding ministers' offices would create more jobs for young Conservative staffers. I guess we could say that is helping somebody out.

Third, at a time when young Canadians cannot find work, when the youth job numbers are five points worse than they were five years ago—last summer we had the worst summer jobs numbers since Statistics Canada started tracking these numbers—the Conservatives have come up with a new super donor credit for young Canadians who contribute. It is pretty hard for young Canadians to contribute when they are suffering under staggering consumer debt. Over 30% of them between the ages of 25 to 29 are living at home, with their parents, because they cannot pay for their own apartment, yet what do the Conservatives do? They say, "We're going to help these people. We're going to make them great philanthropists."

There are not too many young Canadians I know who are going to have wings of hospitals named after them in the near future. The reality is unless the Conservatives are talking about kids with trust funds or something, I do not know too many young Canadians who are in a position to give significant donations to charities or who have tax planners telling them how to do that in a tax-efficient manner. That shows us how out of touch the Conservatives are with middle-class Canadian families.

The reality is young Canadians are suffering. We risk losing a generation of potential in Canada as a result of Conservative inaction.

Government Orders

Nothing speaks more to the degree to which the government is out of touch with the needs and the realities of young Canadians than the fact that one of the few measures it puts in the budget to help young Canadians would help them become philanthropists, at a time when they cannot even make ends meet or pay for their own apartment or get out of debt from their student loans.

In summary, the bill would do nothing significant to help young Canadians who are struggling, it would punish middle-class Canadians with massive tax increases, and it would continue with wasteful spending that reflects the Conservatives' interest in politics and not in the people of Canada. Therefore, we cannot support the budget implementation act.

• (1600)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Minister for La Francophonie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member frequently mentioned youth in his speech.

Youth and their future are at the heart of the economic action plan's 2013 budget. For example, the Canada job grant will help match our job-seeking youth with the additional training they need. Adequate training will help them find a job.

Why is he opposing the economic action plan and all of the measures it contains for internships and support for entrepreneurs? Not only would it allow our youth to gain the experience they need, it would also allow them to work for businesses and gain the skills that will help them find jobs and contribute to our country's prosperity.

Why is he opposing the economic action plan, given that it is a tool for our youth?

• (1605)

Hon. Scott Brison: Mr. Speaker, this budget does nothing for Canada's youth. More needs to be done. Slightly increasing resources for education is not enough. We need to create jobs for youth, for students in the summer, for example. The Conservatives cut funding for that.

I disagree with my colleague, who defends a government that does nothing for Canadian youth.

Mr. Jean Rousseau (Compton—Stanstead, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my hon. colleague on his speech. I was hoping we would talk about the next generation, the generation that we are losing, because this and previous governments have not taken care of them.

Once again, there are no real measures to stimulate job creation and incite young people to join the labour market. There is no extra little boost to help them start their own business or get some post-secondary training.

Could my colleague talk a little more about the measures that are missing from this budget but that could have helped young Canadians find work and contribute to Canada's future?

Hon. Scott Brison: Mr. Speaker, more and more young Canadians want more than anything to gain some work experience. A growing number of youth are having to take unpaid internships or pursue their studies. It makes no sense in a country like Canada.

We need to invest money to encourage the success of Canada's youth. However, that is not a priority to the Conservatives. The Conservatives are completely out of touch with the reality facing young people and their families.

All parties of the House of Commons should work together to examine and present solutions for our youth. However, that is not possible with the Conservatives, since this is not a priority to them.

[*English*]

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, we all know that raising payroll taxes is one of the most effective ways to kill jobs. The EI program was projected to be in a surplus even before the Conservatives decided to hike the EI premiums on employers in this budget. Raising premiums might make some sense if there were a real need, but clearly there is not. The unemployment rate is 1.4 million Canadians out of work, with six job seekers for every job.

My question to the hon. member for Kings—Hants is this: would he like to comment on why the Conservatives are raising payroll taxes at a time like this?

Hon. Scott Brison: Mr. Speaker, first of all, it is the Conservatives who have called payroll taxes a “job-killing tax”. In fact, the Minister of Finance is on the record saying that, yet he has increased payroll taxes by at least \$600 million per year.

This makes no sense at a time when unemployment rates remain stubbornly high. Unemployment rates are still over a point higher than they were five years ago. Employment rates for young Canadians are five points worse than they were five years ago. It makes no sense to increase payroll taxes during a downturn.

In fact, it was the Conservatives who brought in measures on the governance of the EI system to force the system to balance itself over a shorter time horizon, which created the perverse effect of higher payroll taxes during times of downturn. They have since ignored their own mechanism to do that, but it is bad public policy in any case. It has created a lot of uncertainty and it is killing the capacity for small business people to create jobs in Canada.

• (1610)

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague from Kings—Hants for his very clear presentation on the downsides of budget 2013.

My question is about the increase in taxes on dividends for small and medium-sized businesses.

We know that sometimes dividends are a way that small business people can withdraw funds from their company. Often they use it to reinvest in the company. Small and medium-sized businesses often do not have access to public capital; they are not listed on a stock exchange; so that is necessary for their growth, their ability to hire and their ability to invest in innovations.

What explanation does the member have for why it would make sense to put billions of dollars in extra taxes on dividends for small and medium-sized businesses over the coming five years?

Government Orders

Hon. Scott Brison: Mr. Speaker, my colleague for Vancouver Quadra knows of which speaks, because she is one of the most successful entrepreneurs in this House. She and her husband and family have built a global business in reforestation. It is one of the great examples of green businesses that can employ Canadians and create the green jobs of tomorrow.

The member is absolutely right that the Conservatives' increase of \$2.3 billion in taxes on small businesses is going to cost jobs. We cannot take \$2.3 billion out of the economy without it affecting jobs in Canada. However, it is part of the Conservatives' continued tax hikes on the job creators of Canada, which are the small businesses that we need to be encouraging to grow and prosper and employ more Canadians. Instead, the Conservatives are taxing the heck out of them.

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I found it odd that the member was talking about the last seven years of the Liberal government, because he spent much of that last seven years telling Canadians how bad a government it was. It was not until he was offered a cabinet position that he had a big conversion and thought maybe it was a better government than he remembered.

My question is this: is it now the position of the Liberal Party that our foreign aid dollars should be redirected from helping vulnerable people around the world to actually helping those economies that compete with our Canadian manufacturers to put our Canadian manufacturers at a disadvantage?

Specifically, there is a manufacturer in my riding that competes directly with a Chinese business and has applauded the changes to foreign aid that we have made, which will allow him to compete, succeed and hire more people.

Is it now the Liberals' position that our foreign aid should be directed to—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Kings—Hants has 30 seconds to respond.

Hon. Scott Brison: Mr. Speaker, in December 2003, I joined the Liberals. I was elected as a Liberal for the first time in 2004, after which I was invited to join the cabinet.

The reason I joined the Liberals when the Progressive Conservatives merged with the Canadian Alliance was that, as the Progressive Conservative Party's first openly gay member of Parliament, I did not believe there was a place for me with the social conservatives in the Canadian Alliance. I can say that the fact that they still do not have an openly gay member of their caucus or cabinet validates my decision. I am very proud to have followed my

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate, the hon. Minister of Veterans Affairs.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Minister for La Francophonie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak this afternoon and share my time with an outstanding person, namely the member for Ottawa—Orléans. He represents a community in the suburbs of the greater Ottawa area, which includes a large French-speaking community, and he serves it very well.

He also serves veterans very well. He is a member of the Royal Canadian Legion. I can always count on him. He always attends events organized for veterans. I want to thank him and tell him that I am extremely proud to be with him in a Conservative caucus that is working every day to improve the quality of life for the entire Canadian population.

I want to say in no uncertain terms that I will be supporting our government's 2013 economic action plan without reservation, for three very simple reasons.

First, this budget is tailor-made for Canadian families. It is consistent with our policies. For example, we have the lowest taxation rate for families. What we want is for the money to stay in the pockets of our families, so they can use it for their many needs.

We want to be an efficient government that is at their service. That is why we have reduced taxes more than 150 times since 2006. As a result, an average family with four children has \$3,200 more in its pockets because it is paying less in taxes. Young families, among others, are also receiving grants to raise their children up to age six. People are also paying less in GST. We are naturally staying the course on the economy, and a return to a balanced budget.

Second, every person elected represents municipalities or cities. I have the privilege of representing a large portion of the city of Lévis, with my colleague the member for Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière. Now, the city of Lévis has significant infrastructure needs in order to support families and economic growth, and to be able to provide a quality of life in a changing environment. The city of Lévis has infrastructure projects, but so does the municipality of Bellechasse and the Des Etchemins regional county municipality. I am also thinking of Beaumont, which is growing very quickly, and Saint-Louis-de-Gonzague. These municipalities have infrastructure projects.

I support the economic action plan because the huge sums involved will enable municipalities to invest in infrastructure not only this year, but in the years to come. More than \$50 billion in infrastructure spending is planned. For example, we are making the transfer of the excise tax on gasoline permanent. That will enable our municipalities to invest. We will be partnering with the provincial governments to enable them to generate leverage with the investments they make in infrastructure. This will consolidate the economic prosperity of our country.

Third, I support this budget because it is designed to serve people who have put their lives at risk for our country. They have served under Canada's flag. Whether they are still in the ranks of the Canadian Armed Forces or have left, they are our veterans and their families.

I would like to take a few moments to show how much this budget respects the government's responsibility towards its veterans and their families.

Government Orders

In the economic action plan, we have, so to speak, an investment that will represent huge sums in the years ahead for veterans and their families. Among other things, there is one specific measure in the budget: the war veterans' allowance. For this measure to come into force, however, the economic action plan must be supported. I will talk a little more about it.

What struck me first in the budget with respect to benefits for veterans and their families is the need for support when a veteran dies. The funeral and burial program has been substantially improved with respect to funerals for eligible veterans. We are receiving constructive comments from the veteran community on this matter.

•(1615)

We are also improving our contribution to the important date coming up in 2017, namely the 150th anniversary of our country. That will also be the 100th anniversary of a landmark event in our history: the Battle of Vimy Ridge, where Canadians fought together for the first time. We were victorious, but we suffered substantial losses. That is why it is important that we, as a nation, make sure that people do not forget their sacrifice. That is also why we will be investing \$5 million in an interpretation centre at the Canadian National Vimy Memorial.

•(1620)

[*English*]

The measures contained in the economic action plan 2013 take our unprecedented support for Canada's veterans and their families to the next level and demonstrate our continued commitment to veterans. We can see this commitment clearly in our government's response to a Federal Court ruling last spring.

[*Translation*]

The judge who made the decision did not specify its scope. However, he did indicate that there is no connection with the programs provided by National Defence and Veterans Affairs Canada. That said, under the leadership of our Prime Minister and with the support of the Conservative caucus, our government has decided to go beyond this decision, which involved only National Defence, so that the harmonization of our programs also covers those delivered by Veterans Affairs Canada.

This is an envelope of nearly \$1.9 billion. Our government therefore decided immediately to go beyond the court's decision and to stop deducting the disability pension from Veterans Affairs Canada in calculating the monthly payments as an allowance for lost revenue from the department and as an income support allowance from the Canadian Forces. We were able to do it immediately because that was what we wanted to do.

We wanted to accomplish a third item: the war veterans allowance. To do this, we need regulatory changes. That is why we need support from all parliamentarians for the approval of this measure, which is included in the 2013 economic action plan. Some 2,500 modern-era veterans and survivors should benefit from these changes in the first year alone. We also intend to adjust this veterans allowance in the same way.

[*English*]

Economic action plan 2013 calculates that the total impact of these measures, when we combine National Defence and Veterans Affairs Canada together, would be \$1.9 billion over seven years. That is an extra \$1.9 billion in the pockets of disabled veterans and men and women in uniform. We think this is the right thing to do and we seek support from the House to do so. This includes an additional \$95.4 million to veterans above what was announced previously when calculating the earning loss benefit and the Canadian Forces income support benefit.

I want to reiterate how important it is as a government to support the budget for three reasons.

The first is the major increase in the funeral and burial program for those who need it.

The second is the support for the commemorations that would occur at the Vimy memorial centre, which is important. We actually have the Vimy memorial on our new \$20 bill. It is our duty to remember.

The third is the harmonization of all of our programs, especially the veterans war allowance.

That is why I invite members to support the budget not only for all Canadian families, but especially for what it does for our veterans and their families.

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to my colleague's comments. He is urging the opposition to support the bill, yet the Conservatives have once again packed many complex and important issues in the bill to debate before the House. If the member thinks these measures are so important, why has the government crammed them all into this document, not allowing members of Parliament to do the job that Canadians elected us to do, which is to properly scrutinize these measures and come up with the best and most appropriate measures for Canadians?

•(1625)

Hon. Steven Blaney: Mr. Speaker, it is really simple. It is three points that gather to the same reality: economic prosperity and taking care of our families and our veterans. This budget is all about that.

[*Translation*]

Clearly, this is simple: first, do we support investment in our country's infrastructure? I think we do. We need it. That is obvious.

Second, do we want to stimulate economic prosperity and job creation by ensuring that our young people have the training they need to secure the jobs that will enable them to respond to the labour shortages we are facing? Yes.

Third, does it make sense to do what is appropriate for veterans, and harmonize all our programs? As a nation, should we not offer a decent funeral and burial to a veteran who has died from service-related injuries? It is the least we can do.

Government Orders

[English]

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it will come as no surprise that, as the Veterans Affairs critic for the Liberal Party, I do not share the minister's view with respect to the impact of this budget on veterans.

With respect to the Last Post Fund, first, the budget trumpets a \$65 million increase over the next two years. The minister knows, and I would like him to admit it, that this \$65 million would not be spent over the next two years, in spite of the announcement in the budget.

Second, that increase to the Last Post Fund would not help one more veteran. The veterans who qualify would get more money, but not one more veteran would qualify, because the criteria have not changed.

The last thing I will say is that there is much trumpeting over the fact that the government has been beaten into submission by disabled veterans in court and now it is paying up. The exact same day as that lawsuit was launched, there was another lawsuit launched by disabled RCMP veterans. The government has refused to include them in the settlement discussions.

Therefore, does the minister really believe this budget has gone far enough to address the serious problems that exist in the veterans community?

Hon. Steven Blaney: Mr. Speaker, there are important needs for the veterans community and their families, and we are always striving to improve our program. That is exactly what we would do in this budget.

I can assure the member that we will not do like the Liberals did, which was to cut those programs, to cut the funeral and burial program. This is the last thing Canadians would expect us to do. Therefore no, we are not doing that. We are not cutting this program.

Instead of speaking of large numbers, let us see what the impact would be for a deceased veteran who had a service-related injury. We are proposing to raise the maximum funeral services rate from \$3,600 to \$7,376 on top of continuing to provide for the full cost of burial. This means that if a Canadian who has a service-related injury is dying and is in need, this government will cover funeral and all burial costs. This is in the budget. This is why I invite my colleague to support the legislation.

I would like to comment further on the performance and the recognition of the veterans community for the harmonization of our program, but I will share the time with some colleagues.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: 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 Cape Breton—Canso, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada; the hon. member for Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Science and Technology.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Ottawa—Orléans.

[English]

Mr. Royal Galipeau (Ottawa—Orléans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to address the House this afternoon about the merits of economic action plan 2013.

● (1630)

[Translation]

I would like to especially thank the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Minister for La Francophonie for his kind words at the beginning of his speech.

Although the worst of the economic crisis seems to be behind us, the government's priority must continue to be the economy and job creation. In that regard, economic action plan 2013 is right on the mark.

[English]

When the recession struck the best country in the world in 2008, the government responded with a bold plan to invest in our infrastructure. The city of Ottawa and the district of Ottawa—Orléans have benefited greatly from this economic stimulus program.

We need only consider the construction of an east-west light rail in Ottawa, a total investment of \$2.1 billion, \$785 million of which is from the federal taxpayers through the building Canada plan and the federal gas tax fund.

[Translation]

What is more, this capital investment, which is the top and only priority of the City of Ottawa, will create 20,000 jobs a year until 2018.

[English]

I would like to take this opportunity to salute the member for Ottawa West—Nepean and Mayor Jim Watson and councillors Rainer Bloess, Bob Monette, Stephen Blais and Tim Tierney for their leadership in advancing this file.

We can also point to the investment of nearly \$25 million for the first two phases of the Ottawa River action plan and of \$6.7 million for the extension of the Hunt Club Road to Highway 417.

[Translation]

Thanks to the infrastructure improvement fund announced in January 2009 to help kick-start the Canadian economy, the people of Ottawa—Orléans have seen the delivery of 11 projects that directly affect them, at a value of over \$11 million.

[English]

With an economic recovery that was lagging due to economic instability in other countries, the government understood that it had to meet the demands of municipalities and move ahead with another plan for long-term investment in Canada's infrastructure.

What economic action plan 2013 is proposing is \$53 billion over 10 years.

Government Orders

[Translation]

Even though construction of Ottawa's light rail began only last week, elected officials and employees are already working on plans to expand it—even as far as the eastern end of Orléans.

[English]

This important project is close to my heart, and it could be supported by the building Canada plan and the community infrastructure improvement fund.

[Translation]

As you all know, linguistic duality is one of the values of this country that I cherish the most.

[English]

The French and English languages are integral to our history, our identity and our future. They are a treasure that must be defended.

[Translation]

This is a value dear to the hearts of the wise electors of Ottawa—Orléans, where about 30% of the population is French-speaking.

[English]

That is not to say that this value is not also important to the English-speaking residents of Ottawa—Orléans. When they come to settle there, they know that one of their immediate neighbours is going to be French-speaking and they regard this as an asset. They regard linguistic duality as an asset.

[Translation]

The government shares this way of thinking. In addition to supporting the spirit of Bill C-419, the language skills act sponsored by the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent, the government has slightly increased the envelope of the roadmap for official languages, which stands at over \$1.1 billion for 2013-18. This represents the most far-reaching investment in official languages in our history—an increase of 40% over the previous government's plan.

[English]

The new road map will continue to support the learning of English and French as second languages and will continue its support for minority school systems so as to foster the development of citizens and communities.

[Translation]

In an interview with *L'Express*, Ottawa's French-language weekly newspaper, Marie-France Kenny, the president of the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadiennes du Canada, said:

We are happy; this will provide important leverage. For us, it's a real feat for the communities, the minister and the Prime Minister to have managed to maintain funding under the roadmap. For us, it is proof of the importance attributed to linguistic duality and the hard work that has been done in our communities for a year and a half to make our priorities known.

• (1635)

[English]

The Minister of Canadian Heritage promised to listen to Canadians before renewing the road map. He toured the country,

organizing 23 round tables, in two of which I participated. He delivered the goods.

A little earlier, I was saying that job creation had to continue to be the government's priority. Small and medium-size enterprises are the engine of the Canadian economy. SMEs are the backbone of the Ottawa—Orléans economy. Businesses such as SURE Print, Lacroix Source for Sports in Orléans, the Massage and Treatment Clinic and Cuisine & Passion have come to set up shop.

[Translation]

It is my pleasure to recognize André Lacroix, who has owned Lacroix Source for Sports for 40 years. A terrific businessman, he is equally effective at giving back to the community, and he was awarded the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal.

[English]

These companies are very well represented by the Orléans Chamber of Commerce and its dynamic team, with its president, Dan Levesque, its board of directors and its executive director, Jamie Kwong.

In addition to reducing income taxes and cutting red tape, the economic action plan is proposing to expand and extend the hiring credit for small business for one year.

[Translation]

This measure, which has proven its worth in recent years, should benefit 560,000 SMEs.

[English]

Furthermore, we are going to increase the lifetime capital gains exemption from \$750,000 to \$800,000, and then we will index it. This positive measure will improve the return on investment in small businesses by making things easier for entrepreneurs who want to pass on the family business to the next generation of Canadians.

The fate of our soldiers and veterans is very important to me. These brave people have sacrificed so much that our country can enjoy the benefits of freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law. We owe our freedom to them. I see them often, especially when I go to my weekly Saturday breakfast at the Royal Canadian Legion in Orléans.

[Translation]

Economic action plan 2013 contains measures to support these important people.

[English]

We are suggesting an investment of \$1.9 billion over seven years to ensure that our disabled, ill or aging veterans and their families receive the support they need.

We are also proposing to double the reimbursement ceiling for the funeral and burial program. It is the least we can do to offer dignified funeral services for those who have lost their lives defending our country.

Government Orders

Families and communities are not being left behind. We are proposing to invest \$1.9 billion over five years to create more affordable housing and to combat the unfortunate phenomenon of homelessness. We would also like to support families who want to adopt a child by granting them tax relief.

[*Translation*]

Economic action plan 2013 is a reasonable plan that will help our country prosper in spite of these uncertain times.

Mr. Mathieu Ravnat (Pontiac, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened very attentively to the speech by my honourable colleague, who is the member of Parliament for the town where I grew up. I know the area very well. I have a question for him.

I understand that the budget is going to be advantageous for some groups, but there is a specific group for whom the budget will be distinctly disadvantageous: public servants in the area. There are many public servants in the member's riding, and I am wondering if he finds anything of benefit for them in this budget. Tens of thousands of positions have been cut in the region.

How can he defend the budget, in light of this situation?

I would still like to thank him for his speech, though.

• (1640)

Mr. Royal Galipeau: Mr. Speaker, public servants are also taxpayers.

These taxpayers and these public servants keep supporting the government, over and over and despite all the pressure from unions, because they know we are vigilant about public money.

In terms of the moves happening in the public service, they are inconvenient, but they are carried out much more openly and with a great deal more compassion than they were in 1995, under the previous regime. What is really happening is that young people are being promoted and people who are taking early retirement are going on with their lives, and perhaps they are even happier than they were before.

[*English*]

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I again want to address my question to the comments made by the member for Ottawa—Orléans with respect to the measures in the budget for veterans and his specific reference to the doubling of the amount of support that is available for funeral and burial expenses.

The chair of the Last Post Fund testified at the veterans committee a year and a half ago, as follows:

For more than a decade, the Last Post Fund has advocated that the program be extended to modern-day veterans in the same way it was offered to traditional veterans. Unfortunately, the governments of Canada during this period have declined to do so, despite the urging of all veterans organizations.

That wrong has still not been righted by this budget. This budget has increased the amount available to those who are eligible, but it has not changed the eligibility criteria. Not one additional veteran will benefit. Is this really the best we can do?

Mr. Royal Galipeau: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from the hon. member, but he should probably be red in the face for asking it, because members of the third party do not have very much

credibility on issues that have to do with veterans. As far as I remember, the last minister of veterans affairs of the Liberal Party who was believable with veterans was Dan MacDonald. Some of the members across the way were not even born then.

I am glad he asked, because the doubling is from \$3,600 to \$4,400. I visit veterans every week and talk to 50 to 100 of them. They told me it is just what they wanted.

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleagues for that encouraging response. I will be sharing my time with the member for Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel.

I rise today on behalf of the members of my riding of Davenport in Toronto to speak to the bill, the so-called economic action plan.

We have been arguing since I got here in 2011 for some kind of action from the government for cities, some kind of action around, for example, gridlock in Toronto and the fact that the Board of Trade has pegged the cost of gridlock at about \$6 billion a year in the GTA alone. That is a huge drag on the economy of the biggest city in the country.

While I know many members opposite love to hate the city of Toronto, I must say that if the health of the economy in Toronto is going well, we can bet the economy of the region improves, and I dare say that of the country.

There is really no focused attention on the GTA in this budget. In fact the government has cut almost \$4.7 billion in infrastructure from the budget. When we have a gridlock to the tune of \$6 billion in Toronto, we would think there would be something in the budget on that.

Just recently, McMaster University and the United Way tabled a report that showed that almost 50% of workers in the GTA, in Toronto, could not find stable, full-time employment. That is 50% of the workers in the biggest city in the country who cannot find a full-time job.

Some of the members opposite like to pretend we are still living in Pleasantville, 1950, not that it was so pleasant, I do not think, in 1950. However, they like to think that people can still get a job for life when they leave school, and then they can retire with a pension and live their senior years in dignity.

That story, if it ever was true, certainly ended. Today, young people are entering the job market to serial contract jobs. Those jobs have no benefits, and they certainly have no pension and no job security. This is the kind of economy into which the government is welcoming young people, if they can get into it in the first place.

We already know that the official unemployment rate for young people in this country is about 15%, but we know that the unofficial rate is much higher. That 15% is extremely high. It is higher than any of the members across the way ever experienced when they were young, but this is what we are welcoming young people into in the job market.

It is hard to stomach sometimes listening to the government members crow about how great the economy is. They should come to Toronto and talk to the many young people who are working these serial part-time jobs.

Government Orders

The Conservatives have nothing to say. They wax poetic in the way they can, which is marginal to say the least, about the unemployment rate in Saskatchewan. That is fantastic. Their jobs plan is to have everybody who does not live in Saskatchewan and Alberta move there to find the jobs.

Here on this side of the House we are proud of the fact that in those regions things are going well, but I came here to represent the people of Davenport, people in Toronto, and the government has absolutely ignored this city in this budget, certainly, but not just in this budget.

It is an outrage that we have engineers and physicists working as cab drivers in the city while the government is allowing temporary foreign workers to come and essentially work in jobs that people, many of them Canadian citizens, cannot access.

• (1645)

It is an outrage to most fair-minded people in our country. It is certainly an outrage when we try to imagine the economy of Toronto the way it is today and the needs we have in the city. For example, we have over 100,000 families on the affordable housing waiting list in the city of Toronto. There are millions of people across the country on an affordable housing waiting list. There is nothing in the budget to deal with the issue.

We know the economic multiplier of building affordable housing, and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities has mapped it out. We know that this is a key economic engine, yet the government has continually wasted opportunities to deal with the issue. It can only be described as one of the most serious issues we have in the country. In fact, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities has said that affordable housing is the key issue for big cities, small towns and rural municipalities.

Certainly the members from Alberta and Saskatchewan know this quite well, yet they sit there day in and day out, just like the Conservative members from Toronto sit day in and day out and vote against the interests of cities. We can only see that writ large in this budget.

I want to address another issue that urban workers deal with on a daily basis, and there is nothing in the budget that speaks to it. We are trying to develop a 21st century economy and part of that, necessarily, involves what analysts peg as either a \$60-billion or \$80-billion industry. That is the arts and culture sector.

We hear day in and day out from the government that it loves Canadian history and it is a big supporter of this and that battle. For example, it is willing to spend tons of money on the War of 1812. However, many of the arts and culture institutions in our country, I believe 10 of them, are being deeply affected in the budget. These institutions nurture the sector and teach the next generation of technicians, artists, directors and curators, these professionals we rely on not just to preserve our culture but to gather it together and share it with others. The government has thrown away all pretensions of these agencies being third-party, arm's-length to the government with the changes it is proposing in the budget. It is outrageous.

I want to draw the attention of the House to the fact that tomorrow is World Press Freedom Day. I thought it would be worth it to share a small quote, and then I will conclude.

I quote, "...the fostering of an independent, pluralistic and free press is essential to the development and maintenance of democracy in a nation, and for economic development."

Note "economic development".

"By an independent press, we mean a press independent from governmental, political or economic control or from control of materials and infrastructure essential for the production and dissemination of newspapers, magazines and periodicals."

The quote comes from the Declaration of Windhoek on May 3, 1993 at the UN General Assembly. The declaration calls for free, independent, pluralistic media worldwide, characterizing the free press as essential to democracy and as a fundamental human right. Measures in this budget wreak havoc on this essential element of a democratic society.

• (1650)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague mentioned housing, something that always piques my attention.

In Toronto, the vacancy rate, or in other words the number of available housing units, is very low. It is around 1.5%. This results in higher rents, because not many places are available. However, there is not much money in the budget for affordable housing. What does this kind of thing do to the economy of a big city like Toronto?

• (1655)

[*English*]

Mr. Andrew Cash: Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my hon. colleague and applaud her for the great work that she is doing on this important file. Affordable housing and housing security is one of the key determinants of health. That is why this is so essential and is such an egregious omission in this budget.

When we have families and young people spending 40%, 45%, 50% and over 50% of their gross income on housing, they are not spending that money on anything else. They are living in precarious situations. They have precarious jobs. Due to their precariousness, they are not able to help our economy in the way that they really could be, in the way that they really should be, and in the way that we really need them to be.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Rousseau (Compton—Stanstead, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his excellent speech and particularly for the little bit about the performing arts. Arts and culture have once again been ignored by the government, which believes that culture and entertainment make no economic contribution to our society.

Government Orders

I would appreciate it if my colleague would discuss the importance of developing training programs for stage and film technicians. Canada's film industry is internationally recognized for our films, which win awards around the world. The industry is viable and vibrant, but it always needs further refinement. I would also be grateful if he could tell us just how important the record industry is.

I would like him to tell the House more about the importance of this entire industry and why it is important to invest in it and support our culture. After all, we are talking about our heritage.

[*English*]

Mr. Andrew Cash: Mr. Speaker, it is true. We talk a lot about the knowledge economy and we talk a lot about the economy of the 21st century, that we have to move to a different model.

Yes, we have the basics and we have the model right here. It is in the arts and culture sector, where we are competing against the best all over the world. We have developed a phenomenal recording industry and a film industry. We have world-recognized writers and visual artists. We have an industry that supports it to the tune of between \$60 billion and \$80 billion.

This budget, like many other actions of the government, missed great opportunities to leverage this. This is an export commodity that the current government is letting lie fallow when it should be actually supporting the sector and presenting it to the world.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one of the areas, additionally, that we do not find in the bill is any investment in energy efficiency. We had hoped for, and my constituents had hoped for, a return of the home energy retrofit. What I had also hoped for, following a review we are doing in committee, is a major investment of energy efficiency in government buildings instead of cutting civil servants.

Would the member speak to that?

Mr. Andrew Cash: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for the work that she has done raising awareness constantly on issues of the environment. Certainly, in my city in Toronto we have a huge need for investments in energy efficiency.

We saw in the House very recently that the government voted down our motion on the perils of a 2° rise in temperature, yet we can do many things to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. One of the main ones is reducing and conserving energy.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Mylène Freeman (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today, May 2, two years after the NDP was elected as the official opposition. It has been two years, but this budget implementation bill still contains the worst of the Conservative policies, even though this legislation should only include budget measures. Therefore, I will oppose this bill because of its content and because of the process.

Bill C-60, which implements parts of budget 2013, increases the tax burden on Canadians with tax increases for credit unions and small businesses. It also includes higher tariffs on thousands of products. It gives Treasury Board very broad powers allowing it to intervene in the collective bargaining process and to impose terms and conditions of employment on non-unionized crown corporation

employees. It also amends the Investment Canada Act to significantly reduce the number of takeovers that are subject to review. Finally, it proposes a symbolic but inadequate solution to the flawed approach to the temporary foreign worker program.

To fully understand the problems with Bill C-60, we must go back to its source, the 2013 budget. That budget did not include anything really new, nor did it propose anything satisfactory regarding employment. It continued to target services provided to Canadians by trying to shrink the size of government. In this budget, the government tried to pull a fast one with funds allocated to worker training, and by pretending that infrastructure funds were going to increase when in fact they have been reduced, as my NDP colleagues found out. It is very important to point out that what was announced as new money is in fact a budget cut.

This budget also targets workers' funds and all those who benefit from such funds, including small investors and businesses in our regions. Moreover, the budget does not take seriously the problems facing producers, such as the labour shortage. The changes made to the employment insurance program did not help at all, and many farmers and seasonal entrepreneurs in my riding are having a hard time hiring skilled labour this year. They worry about the impact that these changes will have on them. The budget also does not do anything to help them with risk management.

The budget also shows a lack of conviction regarding the implementation of the Emerson report recommendations. That report, commissioned by this Conservative government, was drafted by the industry. The fact that its recommendations were not fully implemented means the Conservatives are not clearly siding with the aerospace industry, even though that industry creates thousands of jobs in a riding like Mirabel.

Again, with this budget, the government missed an opportunity to reverse its decision to slash old age security and many other programs. It is really unfortunate that this budget does absolutely nothing for the citizens of Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel.

By amending close to 50 different acts, Bill C-60 follows the same pattern as omnibus Bills C-38 and C-45.

● (1700)

While it is smaller than similar bills we have seen from this government, it still amends 49 pieces of legislation, which is a lot. The mere fact that the bill has fewer pages does not mean it is no worse. In any case, what Canadians want is not something that is no worse. They want something better. To achieve that, measures should be proposed properly, separately, and they should be debated fairly, based on their merits. They should be proposed responsibly in this Parliament.

Government Orders

Omnibus bills like this one and all the other budget implementation bills are fundamentally bad for democracy and for our Parliament.

With Bill C-60, the Conservatives are trying, for the third time, to circumvent parliamentary and public oversight. Canadians deserve better than a Conservative omnibus bill that adds to their cost of living and does not create jobs.

I want to be clear. I will oppose this omnibus bill because it is altogether bad for the Canadian economy. Regardless of what the Conservatives are saying, budget 2013 and Bill C-60 are measures that will slow down the Canadian economy instead of boosting it.

Budget 2013 cuts thousands of jobs, cuts program spending and weakens GDP growth. The Conservatives' plan, starting with budget 2012, will lead to the loss of 67,000 jobs by 2017 and a 0.57% drop in GDP. That is far from the prosperity the Conservatives promised.

I want to talk about something other than figures, but I do want to say that I did not make them up. They came from the Parliamentary Budget Officer, who was appointed by this government.

As if it were not enough that this budget does nothing for the economy, with this bill, the government continues to go after workers. The bill gives extensive powers to the Treasury Board to intervene in the collective bargaining process and impose terms and conditions of employment on crown corporations. This interference in the negotiating process is very disappointing. The Conservatives are continuing their direct attack on collective bargaining. What a perfect example of doublespeak. They talk about independence for crown corporations, but they want to impose their austerity ideology and they are crushing that independence by interfering in the management of crown corporations.

I also want to mention that workers are not the only ones who will be negatively affected by this bill. The Conservatives really seem to have it in for the regions. Their tax hikes for credit unions and small businesses represent a direct attack on my riding's economy. Credit unions and SMEs are an important part of our communities' economic and social fabric. The Conservatives are taxing them to benefit the major banks and big businesses.

They amended the Investment Canada Act to considerably reduce the number of takeovers subject to review. That means that businesses outside of major urban centres will no longer be reviewed and, without oversight from the government, could be taken over by foreign companies.

Furthermore, how can we forget their ill-advised EI reform, which targets seasonal workers, who are essential to rural economies, or their attack on labour-sponsored funds, which are supported by workers, investors, unions and businesses, especially in the regions?

It is clear that the budget does nothing for my riding.

In conclusion, the government is trying to say that it is doing a good job managing the economy. In this budget, there is nothing for workers and nothing for Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel. People deserve much more, and I hope to have the opportunity to give them more in 2015.

● (1710)

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague said that there is nothing in this bill for workers. That is definitely true, but I want to know if she agrees with the idea that it will harm workers. Sixty-seven thousands jobs will be lost between now and 2017 because of the 2012 and 2013 budgets.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: Mr. Speaker, it is true.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer said that it will harm workers. It will reduce the number of jobs.

Basically, the Conservatives are putting austerity measures in place to reduce the government to nothing. Many people will lose their jobs and services will be cut. In the meantime, changes are being made to employment insurance and many people are worried about their job.

The effects are already being felt in Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, even though these measures have only been in place a few months. Almost every week, a new example of EI mismanagement comes to light.

For example, this week a woman came to my office. She said that they threatened to take her employment insurance benefits away if she did not go to Saint-Jérôme, which is a 30-minute drive from her home in Lachute. The only way to get there is highway 50. However, she does not have a car. That makes it pretty hard to do.

The measures this government is taking are clearly against workers, especially workers in the regions.

[*English*]

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I especially understand the comments made by the member in response to her last question on the impact EI changes have on a region.

The Atlantic premiers wrote a letter. In it they said:

These impacts are most acutely felt in seasonal industries, which make up a significant portion of the Atlantic economy. These changes were introduced without consultation or shared analysis, and therefore without a full understanding of the effect of the changes. Atlantic premiers urged the Federal Government to suspend the changes to the program pending the completion of an evidence-based approach.

That is in information from the Council of Atlantic Premiers, and what those people are saying is that the current government's changes—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Hon. Wayne Easter: Mr. Speaker, I hear some of the backbench members from Atlantic Canada over there chirping, but they stand and support the Prime Minister like trained seals.

My question for the member is this. Does she see the same kind of impacts in the rural areas of Quebec?

Government Orders

Ms. Mylène Freeman: Mr. Speaker, in Argenteuil and Papineau we have already seen a lot of people coming forward with issues surrounding the changes to employment insurance, impacts that they have already felt, whether it is clawbacks or fear of what will happen to them when their job is to plant things, and they cannot plant things in the winter. It has definitely had an impact for employers in the region that are no longer able to find people who want to come back in the summer because they are afraid of what it will mean for their salary down the road.

Therefore, this is having a huge impact on whether people live in the regions. Bringing new generations into rural areas is something that places like Argenteuil and Papineau are putting so much work into doing right now. We are not far from Ottawa or Montreal. It should be a place where people want to go, live and work, and not too far from the city. However, unfortunately people are afraid they are going to have to drive to Gatineau or Montreal just to work for a minimum wage. People do not want to move into the region anymore.

Unfortunately, this is what is happening and it is clear it is because the Conservatives did not study how this would impact Canadians when they made the changes to employment insurance.

I also want to mention, while I am on my feet, that it is too bad the Conservatives also did not go back on their changes to OAS. Canadians have been calling for this as well, and it is not fair to ask these people to work longer. OAS is supposed to be a security net, not something that makes people work longer.

● (1715)

Hon. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Burlington.

It is very interesting. I have listened to the debates this afternoon and opposition members have been arguing about the rationale as to why they cannot support Bill C-60, our economic action plan.

I would like to give them a few examples of reasons why they should support it. It is rather important legislation that continues a growth pattern that we have started on as a government.

We have come out of the recession as number one in the world, which is really rare for Canada as it has never been there before. It is exciting to see the numbers of jobs that have been created and the opportunity that we have as far as growth as we move forward.

Maybe I will close with some of the optimistic things that we can talk about within our country, but this legislation builds on that. Just for one reason alone, if the opposition is looking at something it could support, it certainly could support our veterans. This legislation would give a very nice benefit to our vets. For that reason alone, the opposition should support it.

Then again, it should also be supporting what the legislation does with regards to going after tax evaders, something that has not happened for many years. Just in fairness, as Canadians, and for no other reason, the opposition should support it to ensure everyone pays their fair share of taxes and to deal with those who cheat.

When it comes to the indexing of the gas tax, I heard the opposition say that the number one problem in municipalities was housing. I would beg to differ. The number one problem in

municipalities, as we have heard right across the country from coast to coast to coast, is infrastructure. The legislation deals with \$53 billion of infrastructure over a 10-year period, the most aggressive infrastructure plan that we have ever laid out as a country. For that reason alone, the opposition should support the legislation.

We would be lowering taxes and providing flow-through shares for mining and keeping that industry going. The accelerated capital cost allowance creates a tremendous amount of opportunity in manufacturing and opportunity for job growth and industry growth for many years to come. This is a great benefit in the legislation. The opposition should be supporting it because of that, or because of the hiring tax credit that has been continued for small businesses, which is a real benefit that it should be supporting. Even the capital gains exemption has gone up for lifetime capital gains for individuals. This is should be supported.

For those reasons alone, and I could go on about many other reasons, the opposition should support the bill. Instead, we hear a lot of negativity and some things that are negative have nothing to do with the legislation as far as arguments go. I guess I should not be alarmed about that, because when the opposition runs out of manufactured reasons for not supporting it, it comes up with reasons that are not even in the bill.

I would like to spend my time on the number one issue in my riding, which is the lack of labour. It is different from what I heard from the hon. member from Toronto, who suggested the number one problem was unemployment.

I have the opposite problem in my riding, which is a good thing in some ways, but in other ways it is not. The temporary foreign worker program was there to address it in the last election. When the people of my riding discerned whether I was the right person to vote for, the number one issue they came forward with was a lack of labour. The importance of the temporary foreign worker program was to deal with the kinds of reduction and the ability for corporations and industries to grow and create the kinds of opportunity for our region and our country.

However, the temporary foreign worker program was something we said we would take a look at, to see if we could find ways to make that program work even more effectively. Guess what? We did. We made the program work even more effectively and efficiently. However, there is a bit of a problem with the temporary foreign worker program and this legislation addresses that.

In my riding, unemployment is zero. The real objective of the temporary foreign worker program is that it does not take away jobs from Canadians, but helps complement the workforce where there are no Canadians to fill those jobs.

Government Orders

● (1720)

Even where unemployment is virtually zero or very close to it, there are people in the system who have abused the program, even in my riding. This needs to be addressed. In this piece of legislation, we are going after those individuals, tweaking the program and will be consulting on this program in the future to make it better so that it actually deals with what it was intended to do, which was complement and not replace Canadian workers.

There are seven ways that this piece of legislation lays out how it is going to be changed. The first one would come into effect immediately and it is with respect to the pay differential, which was brought in about a year or a year and a half ago and was not being used. Only about 5% of those using the program even bothered with it. Let us get rid of the compromised price of 15% for skilled workers or 5% for lower-skilled workers on the differential of what those individuals are being paid. That we got rid of in this piece of legislation.

We are going to temporarily suspend in this piece of legislation the accelerated labour market opinion process, which was something they were asking for. In my riding, people needed it. We are not going to cancel it in this legislation, just suspend it while we take a breather, do some consultation and look at how we build on this program to make it even better.

The third thing in this piece of legislation on the program is to make sure it has the power to deal with those who abuse the process in the sense of being able to take away, revoke or suspend the labour market opinion process, the work permit as well as the LMO. This is something we need if we are going to be able to deal with those who refuse to see it as a program to complement Canadian workers and use it to replace Canadian workers, which we are seeing even in an area such as ours.

The fourth change to the temporary foreign worker program in this piece of legislation is to make sure we stop outsourcing. The program was never intended to replace the Canadian workforce and to have people work outside our country is a total abuse. This piece of legislation deals with that as well. That is another reason for certain that the opposition should be supporting it.

The fifth reason is that we want to make certain there is a plan in place for corporations that get LMOs and use temporary foreign workers to replace them long term with the Canadian workforce. That may be the most difficult one in my riding to comply with, so we are going to go through a process of consultation on that.

The sixth thing is to make sure that the fund is self-funded. There is no way that the taxpayer should be supporting this fund. The employer should be doing that.

The seventh thing is to make sure that English and French are the only mandatory languages necessary for foreign workers.

Those are the seven changes. The agricultural community and the agriculture workforce are exempt from most of these, except that if people abuse the system, the work permits will be revoked.

These are wonderful changes to the program, but it is in a process of consultation. It is one of the most important pieces in this bill that will impact all of Canada, but particularly my riding.

We have a wonderful experience in Canada. When we were coming through the recession, my colleagues in America went green with envy. They call Canada the miracle to the north because of the jobs created, the lower taxes, how we are freeing up the private sector to grow, capitalizing on international markets and moving to balanced books. For that, we should be very excited as Canadians. We have a great story to tell. We are doing some wonderful things not only in this budget, but in past budgets. This complements past ones. All members should think soberly about that and support this piece of legislation.

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one of the problems, of course, with an omnibus budget bill is that one can pick and choose what one decides to talk about and skim over some of the rest. With the Conservatives, unfortunately, the devil is always in the details when it comes to their budget bills.

I want to ask about two issues in particular that I did not hear the member mention and that trouble me.

As members will recall, I have quite often risen in the House to talk about issues related to Canada Post as they were brought to me both by constituents, and when I was the labour critic, by communities right across the country with respect to post office closures, staff layoffs and particularly with respect to collective bargaining. When I was asking those questions, the government always said, "Oh, it's an arm's-length relationship, and we couldn't possibly comment."

Well, in this budget bill we learn that those are the shortest arms in the world. In this budget bill, the government is interfering quite directly in the collective bargaining rights of the workers at not only Canada Post but also CBC and with respect to VIA Rail.

I ask the member quite specifically: why is this budget bill meddling in the managerial autonomy of crown corporations?

Second, there are provisions in this budget that also deal with the Investment Canada Act.

The member would also know that on a number of occasions I have raised the story of the U.S. Steel buyout of Stelco under the Investment Canada Act where absolutely no production or employment guarantees were met by that company. The government took them to court, and was winning every step of the way, but then folded like a cheap shirt.

How do these Investment Canada Act provisions actually help the people who are now for the third time, in three collective agreement negotiations, locked out by the company?

Government Orders

• (1725)

Hon. Rob Merrifield: Mr. Speaker, it is an absolutely wonderful story that we have with regard to investments in Canada, and for those who come to this country to invest and create opportunities for employment in manufacturing, as well as the opportunity in the long run for Canadians on investments. This is one of the first times in the history of our country that we actually have the floodgates wide open because it is all about confidence. People are going to invest in this country because of the confidence that is here that they would actually be making money.

In fact, I was talking to a group this morning from chemical corporations in this country that are dealing with investments. They are looking at infrastructure builds of \$5 billion over the next five years. They are saying that they have corporations all over the world, but the corporations that are making the most money are really Canadian corporations. Why? It is because of the competitive advantage that we are giving them. We are working to make certain that we have the opportunities for Canadians to be able to develop manufacturing jobs and good jobs in the long run. These are one small example of the kinds of investments that are coming into this country.

When it comes to Canada Post, CBC and other crown corporations, they are arm's-length from government, but we want to make sure that they are sustainable in the long run. We have to work and be responsible to Canadians and to the public we represent by making sure that these crown corporations move in that direction. That is where I believe this piece of legislation will take us.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have no idea how he can say that with a straight face.

He mentioned infrastructure earlier. However, the infrastructure money is coming from the building Canada fund, an old program that did not use up all of its funding. They are claiming that there is new money but, in reality, they are cutting \$5.8 billion over five years.

These are not new funds and this is not the most money any government has ever spent. That is untrue.

[*English*]

Hon. Rob Merrifield: Mr. Speaker, I beg to differ with my hon. colleague: it is absolutely new. It is indexed gas tax funds, which is brand new, plus \$14 billion in larger projects. I do not have the numbers in front of me, but collectively it is \$53 billion in 10-year, long-term, stable funding.

This is exactly what the Federation of Canadian Municipalities has been asking for across Canada. This is what it is getting in this piece of legislation. It is the most excited. When I talk to mayors and reeves in municipalities across my riding, they are absolutely ecstatic about this bill. They want it passed because they then can make some long-term plans for solid infrastructure that will build this country a long way into the future.

My hon. colleague should support this piece of legislation if for no other reason than the infrastructure alone.

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to stand and talk about Bill C-60, the first BIA. There is normally one in the spring and one in the fall.

I want to say a couple of words before I begin on the actual substance of the bill. We are hearing from the opposition about the length of the bill. That is a legitimate concern. Therefore, I looked at it. It is 115 pages, in English and in French. It is not 115 in English and 115 in French. It is a total of 115 pages.

I am absolutely positive that my colleague from Hamilton Mountain can read 50 pages and understand what it is in it. The argument that this is some sort of big bill that is unmanageable is completely false. If the opposition cannot read 50 pages, then we have something to really worry about.

Let us be fair. This is a 50-page bill, 115 pages in both languages. If members are talented enough, which I am not, to read it in both languages, it is 115 pages. It is not that long.

I want to thank the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance for hosting the overview of the bill on Monday night. There was a decent crowd there of members of Parliament and staff.

Every section was reviewed, not by the political staff but by members of the finance department. They went clause by clause, division by division, and answered questions from the floor from all parties on what was in this implementation bill, Bill C-60. They gave non-partisan answers to what was in the bill.

I would encourage all members of Parliament who are interested in the financial aspects of the budget and the implementation bill to take advantage of the opportunity that the government is providing to all members of the House. The briefings that took place on Monday night of this week made a significant difference in the understanding of what was in these clauses before us today.

Let me go to some of the points I think are very important to my riding, to me personally, to my constituents and to the country as a whole. I will see how much time I have and how far I can go on these.

Let us talk about the adoption expense tax credit that the opposition will vote against. With this tax credit for adoptive parents, we are adding to what they can deduct in their quest as a family to adopt a child or baby. It is an opportunity. We understand, on this side of the House, that there are costs and effort for young families to adopt a child.

We are using the tax credit system to say that we understand what they are trying to do, that they are doing a good thing for their family, that they are doing a good thing for the country and we are providing some assistance in the adoption expense tax credit.

We are also offering a first-time donor's super credit. For people who have not donated before, we are adding an extra 25% to that first-time donation that they make to an organization, if they and their spouse have not donated since 2007. We are encouraging Canadians to support charities.

Government Orders

Where did we get this from? We have done consultations as individual members and the finance committee heard people from across the country. These are the kinds of support for which the not-for-profit charity sector asked. That is what is being delivered. It is in the budget, which is a policy document. The implementation bill is what takes parts of that budget and puts them into law. It implements those changes. I am very supportive of that change.

Another important change we are making has to do with more of a technical issue. We are providing assistance to the registered disability savings plan for adult beneficiaries.

● (1730)

I am very proud of this government for developing the registered disability savings plan that did not exist before we took office. We heard that at the finance committee. In the field we talked to different individuals and organizations about what is needed for disabled adults and disabled children and parents who were concerned about their financial well-being after they had passed.

We developed this registered disability plan, and that plan came back for a review. In my riding there was a meeting to discuss changes that could be made, and one of the issues was somebody being able to take out a registered disability savings plan for another adult who was unable to do it at that time because of physical or mental issues, just not being able to do it. The change we are implementing in this bill will make that happen. I am very proud of this.

In my riding, 50% to 60% of people are over age 55, which is relatively senior. I am not quite there yet, but I am getting closer by the day. In this bill we are adding some services such as bathing, feeding, assistance in dressing, taking medication and so on to the GST-HST exemption for health care services for seniors. This is a very positive piece of relief for those who require those services from publicly funded organizations. In the past and up until this bill passes, they had to pay HST in Ontario, and this bill would remove that. I cannot believe the opposition members are voting against it.

We often hear in the news about how much influence a member of Parliament can have. On tariff relief for Canadian consumers, I have an organization in my riding called Source For Sports, and a gentleman named Randy Hooper, who is now retired from that organization, said to me a few years ago that they were big importers of hockey equipment and they were not competitive with U.S. counterparts because of the tariff on hockey equipment. People in Burlington can easily go to the border, one hour away, cross into Buffalo and buy hockey equipment. I took that issue up and wrote a letter and spoke directly to the finance minister. It did not happen right away, but it did happen eventually. I am thankful that I had the opportunity as a member of Parliament to represent my constituent, represent my constituent business and make the point that we need to look at this issue. I may have had a small influence on making that happen, and that is what a member of Parliament should do. I am very proud of that and I want to make sure, even though Mr. Hooper is retired, that he gets credit for bringing that to my attention.

● (1735)

Another area I would like to talk about, as I said, is that we have a fairly large senior population in my riding, and we also have a fairly large veterans group in my riding. Many of them are naval veterans.

For some reason the navy did a very good job of recruiting in Burlington. We have one of the nicest naval monuments in the country in Burlington on our waterfront. I am very proud that the Minister of Veterans Affairs recognized the issue of the disability payment being deducted as income from recipients before they received the rest of the allowance. We are removing that so they can keep the full amount. It is excellent that it is in the budget and we are implementing it. It will have a major impact on many veterans in my riding.

Finally, we are obviously looking at the gas tax. The member who spoke before me talked about the importance of infrastructure. I hear it all the time from my municipality. I hear it from FCM. I have an open-door policy with my local council group. We have a very good relationship, and they talk about infrastructure all the time. We are indexing the gas tax. We are providing support for infrastructure. That is another area that will have a direct impact on my riding.

I appreciate the time I have had to speak to Bill C-60. I hope everyone in the House will support it.

● (1740)

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I always enjoyed being on committee with my colleague. He does drop in from time to time. He just cannot stay away from the estimates.

I have two questions for the hon. member.

I did take the time to go through this bill. I have a question for him on something that puzzles me. I would appreciate his explaining to me, in division 16, amendments to section 227 of Department of Public Works and Government Services Act, why these needed to be amended and put in the bill.

My second question is about the previous comments that were made by his colleague about the temporary foreign worker program. I come from the same province, and I must say that the feedback I am getting on the temporary foreign worker program does not appear to be the same as the member is getting, but then again I do not just consult with corporations, which is where he said he consulted.

I wonder if the member could advise me as to whether or not, in bringing forward these amendments, the government has consulted widely with organizations such as the Alberta Federation of Labour, which has done some extensive analyses and given support to temporary foreign workers. Has he consulted with churches? I have heard from the Lutheran Church and the Anglican Church. They are very upset about this program and the lack of support for temporary foreign workers.

I have also been told that the supposed new provision to analyze future work plans for a company always had to be provided. It is not a new provision. It was just never enforced.

Government Orders

Mr. Mike Wallace: Mr. Speaker, I am not exactly sure why the member would be opposed to the changes in division 16. Those members talk about working together here in the House, and here we have division 16, the proposed amendments that would allow the minister to seek both specific and general approval from the Governor in Council from public works for tools and services to help other jurisdictions, particularly in the purchasing area. The actual change would allow the Minister of Public Works to have more flexibility when it comes to working with municipalities and provinces on procurement issues, so that we can provide services to those organizations in a more efficient and effective way.

I am not exactly sure why those members are opposed to that, but that is what it would do. Maybe it needs to be explained. I am sure somebody from the Department of Finance would be happy to explain it to the member.

The other issue was about temporary foreign workers. We have been clear that the temporary foreign worker program has a role to play in this country, that there are parts of this country that need support and that there are companies having trouble finding employees. We recognize that there are some issues and, as with any government program, there are abuses sometimes. We have to make sure those abuses are eliminated or at least minimized to the absolutely greatest possible extent, and that is exactly what we are doing. I am assuming that those members are supportive of that.

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member for Burlington, just like the Minister of Finance, talked a fair bit about hockey helmets. I guess he believes that his request to reduce the cost of hockey helmets really helped, and maybe it did.

Does the member for Burlington not have any young families in his riding who happen to ride bicycles? Does he not have any really young families that like to buy little red wagons?

Does he not recognize that in that area the government is proposing to put \$338 million, which is a tax, on people? If the government was doing something to improve the manufacturing sector in Canada, that would be one thing, but what it is really doing is taking that \$338 million out of the back pockets of middle-class families. Why?

Mr. Mike Wallace: Mr. Speaker, the question tells a story. Not only is the leader of the Liberal Party over his head, but the whole Liberal Party, at least the political arm, is over its head. This country would drown with them in charge, if they ever came back.

They talk about fairness. How is it fair for companies in China and India to get an advantage over our Canadian companies? We are moving forward. We are making it fair for our companies to compete.

● (1745)

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. We will now resume debate at a somewhat more civilized level. Resuming debate, the hon. member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles.

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to be able to comment on this budget. I listened attentively to those who spoke before me. I believe

that the debate will generate some passion, as we just heard in a few of the previous comments.

To begin with, I would like to point out that this is the 32nd time that the Conservative government has taken away our right to comment in the House. It is truly a scandal, and it must stop. It is essential that members be allowed to give their speeches, say what they have to say, and speak about their needs and the problems society will have to face if a budget like this one is adopted. Under this budget, the Conservatives are increasing taxes and reducing services.

I would like to comment on a number of things such as family, freedom and poverty. The budget cannot avoid addressing matters like these. I would also like to talk about job creation.

Even though the government quotes figures and tweaks them from one year to the next, they never give us a start date for how these figures were calculated, and the fact remains that jobs are being lost. Jobs have been lost at White Birch in Quebec. I could mention other companies, like Electrolux, where jobs have been lost. Work may be moving from one province to another, but we are after all living in a confederation and jobs need to be created everywhere. The youth unemployment rate has spiked significantly, and this should compel us to do something.

What the government gives with the right hand, it takes away with the left. I believe that many of my colleagues have been able to demonstrate this. On one hand, a fund is established to help young families, and tax credits are made available for artistic activities; but on the other, a surcharge is imposed on products that cross the border, which takes back the money that these families had saved from their reduced taxes. They are therefore disguised tax hikes.

Just now, the member for Ottawa—Orléans took the floor. I wonder whether he lives on the same planet as my colleagues and I. He said that cuts have been made in a compassionate manner.

Cutting jobs and employee salaries is not a very compassionate thing to do. I will explain how it was done. Those whose jobs were being cut received a letter telling them that jobs would be eliminated in their department.

They were told that X number of positions would be eliminated, but were not immediately told which jobs would be eliminated. Is that what the Conservatives mean by "being compassionate"? Sometimes, employees were asked to choose from among the duties and work being done, what positions were less useful than others. Is that what they call "being compassionate"? That is not what I would call it. There is one small restriction.

This budget is a direct attack on labour funds. In Quebec, the CSN and the FTQ have labour funds. Not so long ago, I sent my constituents a ten-percenter and the highest response rate I ever received had to do with labour funds and the FTQ. These funds allow people to deduct 15% extra from their taxes to make some savings. What the right hand gave away, the left took back, yet again. This additional deduction to which these people were entitled has been taken away.

Government Orders

Who contributed to these funds? They were often people whose wages were very low. It enabled them to save about \$1000 a year. Year after year, they would try to save an extra \$1,000. Then, by retirement, they would have saved a total of roughly \$10,000, \$15,000 or \$20,000. They saved their entire lives.

Before being a member of Parliament, I worked in an organization. I met people who were earning \$30,000 or less per year. In spite of this, they managed to put a little money aside to invest in this terrific fund.

The 15% tax break for the labour fund contributions encouraged them to save their pennies. These are the people who are being attacked. The labour funds, whether the CSN's or the FTQ's, are being attacked.

Labour force training is also being attacked. We succeeded in getting something into the budget that says that a company can now deduct \$5,000 for training if it invests that much in training.

What companies are we talking about?

• (1750)

In Quebec, there is the 1% labour force training program. Now none of the small companies will be able to make that deduction because once again, this budget helps the big players, but not the small ones. Small businesses will not be able to invest \$5,000 in labour force training to match what the government might give. This skews the debate. The companies lose out and labour force training will suffer. Workers, individuals and competitiveness, when all is said and done, will lose out.

I do not know whether the government thought about this aspect, but it is essential; the less training one has, the less competitive one is and the less competitive, the lower the sales, the lower demand for the product and you begin to go under. Our leader has pointed out that in Canada, small businesses and manufacturers have lost a great deal in recent years.

For 2013 and 2014, the budget forecast a deficit of approximately \$16.5 billion. In reality, this will be \$18.7 billion. Despite all these cuts, Canada's deficit is growing. People are being fooled when they tighten their belts and deprive themselves of everything. It might be worth asking which people are really depriving themselves.

Everything is really upside-down. They are going to pick the pockets of the smallest companies to pay for the majority, rather than the other way around. What are taxes for? Why were they created? Taxes are collected to redistribute wealth through infrastructure, worker training and various other mechanisms. When roads are built, a group of individuals pays and it is all redistributed.

Clearly, the company for which a four-lane road is built does not pay for it. Nor does it pay for the time its trucks spend on the road to deliver a product from point A to point B. People pay for it through taxes. They pay out of their pockets, and they are going to pay more and more. The sales tax was lowered, but the prices of products entering the country are going up.

I have been putting together a file for a year now. This bill follows on from two others, Bill C-38, which was introduced a year ago in the spring, and Bill C-45, which was next in line. In the latter,

employment insurance was hard hit. The bill tried to define suitable employment and discarded the previous definition. What we have is the party in power deciding what is suitable for them.

Mr. Speaker, when you retire one day, we will decide for you what you are going to do. You will be able to do something other than what you are doing now. In fact, you will be able to do many things, because you are highly skilled in several areas. Others will therefore decide what is suitable for you.

Some extremely strange things have happened: people who worked in agriculture, for example, being offered jobs washing dishes in restaurants. I think everyone is aware of these strange goings-on.

I would like to talk about a letter I received from the elected representatives in the north shore region, who tell us that the employment insurance reform—and hence the consequences of these notorious mammoth budgets—runs counter to the interests of north shore workers. It will completely undermine the economy.

People remember what the government said during the last election: “power to the regions”, yet for now, the regions have been totally abandoned, and our elected representatives are saying so.

Next week, people from Prince Edward Island, including the minister, will be coming here to speak to us about employment insurance. The people of Prince Edward Island and the Atlantic provinces are being thoroughly swindled. Seventy percent of all seasonal workers are in the Atlantic provinces.

• (1755)

[*English*]

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it may have been a translation issue, but I just want to clarify. I thought I heard my colleague say that the deficit continues to grow with the 2013-14 budget. On page 12 of the budget, it is clear that the deficit in 2012-13 is \$25.9 billion and in 2013-14 it is \$18.7 billion. My math indicates that this is a clear reduction.

I wonder if my colleague would clarify what her intent was in saying that the deficit is growing, when in fact, the deficit is going down dramatically.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: Mr. Speaker, the figures I have before me clearly indicate \$264 billion in revenue and \$283 billion in expenditures, which means a deficit of about \$19 billion.

Mr. Jean-François Larose (Repentigny, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank my hon. colleague for her excellent presentation.

She talked about how this government seems to be attacking workers. In my riding, Electrolux workers are losing their jobs, while the government does nothing to help. Very little is being done, despite the promise made by the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development in question period. People are still waiting.

It seems to me that this government is doing whatever it takes to eliminate jobs with excellent working conditions, and even precarious jobs—because middle-class Canadians are having a hard time making ends meet—in order to create a class of accessible jobs.

*Private Members' Business***PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

[English]

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC)** moved:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should endorse the report of the Panel on Labour Market Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities entitled "Rethinking disAbility in the Private Sector", and its findings, and commit to furthering public-private cooperation by: (a) building on existing government initiatives, such as the Opportunities Fund, the Registered Disability Savings Plan, the ratification of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the Labour Market Agreements for Persons with Disabilities; (b) issuing a call to action for Canadian employers to examine the expert panel's findings and encouraging employers to take advantage of private sector-led initiatives to increase employment levels for persons with disabilities in Canada; (c) pursuing greater accountability and coordination of its labour market funding for persons with disabilities and ensuring that funding is demand driven and focussed on suitable performance indicators with strong demonstrable results; (d) establishing an increased focus on young people with disabilities to include support mechanisms specifically targeted at increasing employment levels among youth with disabilities, through programs such as the Youth Employment Strategy; and (e) strengthening efforts to identify existing innovative approaches to increasing the employment of persons with disabilities occurring in communities across Canada and ensuring that programs have the flexibility to help replicate such approaches.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am thrilled to rise today to speak to this private member's motion, which takes aim at an issue that is of tremendous importance: creating economic opportunities for Canadians with disabilities. Let me set a frame of reference for this bill.

Many of us come from different backgrounds and different experiences in life, and it is the intersections of life that create opportunities for individuals. Many who live with disabilities have to face enormous challenges and barriers. My motion seeks to address some of these barriers by creating an environment where business people would see the business case to hire persons with disabilities. The motivation for this bill comes from individuals who I have had the life experience of meeting and knowing and who have been hugely inspirational.

In my community, there is a young man, Jesse Robitaille, who greets people at a company called SC Johnson. It is a very large employer. He is at the reception counter. Jesse can take people anywhere in the plant, and it is a large plant. He can introduce people to anyone in that facility and he inspires everyone he meets.

Driving through downtown Brantford to Rawdon Street, we will meet Lisa Hooper, as we knock on her front door of her home. In the front three rooms of her home are her offices, where we will meet three persons with disabilities, including her. She is an entrepreneur, and she coaches and teaches the skill sets of how to become employed to people who have disabilities. She connects employers to persons with disabilities. She is an amazing individual, a true entrepreneur.

There is also Norman Hurren, who works at Brantford Volkswagen. As we go into Brantford Volkswagen, we meet the employees and the owners of the business. They are the first to tell us how important Norman is to their operation.

Is the goal here to help the multinationals that want to come and take over our huge country, or to support the multinationals that are already here, who seem to be in bed with the Conservatives? This has been proven over and over. The Conservatives are very proud to say they created new jobs, but all it is is cheap labour.

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: Mr. Speaker, I did not want to name Electrolux earlier, because I did not know whether it was official. Indeed, this is another company whose head office is moving to the U.S. As a result, we will lose nearly 2,000 jobs if I am not mistaken. From what we saw, absolutely nothing was done about it.

Conversely, the Conservatives will let in a company like Target, which will hire people at minimum wage. The Conservatives welcome it with open arms, even though it will mean competition in our own market.

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her excellent speech. I listened to her carefully and she was right about workers, the middle class and families being neglected in this budget. She also talked about labour-sponsored funds.

In my riding of Drummond, people are offended, shocked and angry that the labour-sponsored funds tax credit is being eliminated. The same goes for employment insurance. Nothing is being done to fix the employment insurance reform. This past weekend, the whole team was in Montreal again to support our constituents and chambers of commerce, which are telling us that this makes no sense.

Just now, my hon. colleague, who is the chair of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, did not ask a single question about the environment. Let me tell you why. It is because there is nothing in the budget for the environment. That is why he did not ask any questions about the environment, even though he is the chair of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development. It is truly deplorable. He is ready to stand up, but unfortunately it is not his turn.

Can my hon. colleague tell me what could have been done so much better to meet the needs of our families?

• (1800)

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: Mr. Speaker, there is currently an originating motion to deem unconstitutional that famous manoeuvre that allowed the government to take \$57 billion from the employment insurance fund, whether under Paul Martin or Mulroney. Maybe the first thing we should do is think about giving the money back to the workers.

In addition, they now continue to help themselves to \$1.3 billion or so. That means that they continue to take money out of workers' and employers' pockets for the simple reason that the ceiling has been raised and the employee contribution rate has gone up by 5¢ per \$100.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 6 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

Private Members' Business

Last, if we go about an hour and a half east and north of Brantford, we will come to Bradford. If we go to the nursery in Bradford, we will meet Mathew Daviau. Mathew Daviau is a long-time friend of our family, a young man who has overcome many barriers. Yesterday, as we were approaching the time to speak to this issue in the House of Commons, his mother sent me an article that had been recently written about Mathew and how he is an inspiration to people who patronize that particular nursery.

Canadians with disabilities represent this country's most significant untapped pool of labour force talent. In fact, there are more than 800,000 Canadians living with a disability but whose disability does not prevent them from working, and almost half of these people have a post-secondary education. These are people who are ready, willing and able to contribute more to our country's economic prosperity. They want to be a bigger part of Canada's economy and gain access to the opportunities and benefits that will accompany their economic inclusion.

My motion takes aim at this issue. It calls for the House to endorse the insightful recent report from the Panel on Labour Market Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities called "Rethinking disAbility in the Private Sector", which contains a number of important messages. Perhaps the most striking message from the panel report is that hiring people with disabilities is not just the right thing to do; it is actually great for a business. Studies consistently show that the vast majority of disabled employees perform as well or better than their non-disabled counterparts, and business persons who hire people with disabilities regularly see an increase in productivity and significant declines in tardiness, absenteeism and employee turnover.

It is time to break down the myths and the stigmas of hiring people with disabilities, which have persisted for far too long in the private sector.

● (1805)

This sentiment was echoed in a recent Deloitte report, which found the following:

There is a need to build greater awareness and educate those involved in hiring to eradicate myths and stereotypes and create a culture of workplace opportunity for people with disabilities. There are several organizations in the business community right now trying to make this happen...but more organizations need to commit to making a difference...

My dream is tens of thousands of private business owners recognizing how people with disabilities can enhance their businesses. Therefore, my motion not only calls on the House and the government to endorse the panel report but goes further. It calls on private sector businesses to hear, examine and act on its findings. Moreover, the motion encourages private sector leadership in this area and calls on the government to support new private-sector-driven approaches that address the current employment situation.

Already our government is showing a willingness to take this approach and support initiatives from the private sector enterprises that are at the front line on this issue. Economic action plan 2013 earmarks \$2 million for the creation of the Canadian employers disability forum, as recommended by the panel report, which will be spearheaded by major employers, such as Loblaw Companies Limited. The forum will be managed by employers for employers to facilitate education and training and the sharing of resources and best

practices to connect Canadians with disabilities to the jobs that are available.

This is the right approach, but certainly, there is much more we can do. My motion calls for an increased focus in government programs such as the youth employment strategy on young people living with disabilities. This comes from hearing loud and clear from organizations, such as the Canadian Association of Community Living, that creating more workplace and volunteer opportunities for young people with disabilities is incredibly important. It can make a huge difference in their lives. If we can help people with disabilities gain work experience at a young age, the likelihood that they will stay in the labour force will increase dramatically.

Motion No. 430 calls for new approaches that will strengthen government programs that can improve the social and economic inclusion of people living with disabilities. We know that community-based organizations are developing innovative strategies across the country to create social and economic opportunities for these individuals. In fact, the panel report was clear in declaring that effective community partnerships are essential for increasing employment for persons with disabilities. That is why my motion calls for government programs to be less rigid and more flexible so that they can capitalize on new, innovative approaches, the best of which tend to be tailored to specific community-level needs.

Motion No. 430 is a motion that responds to the calls of disability advocates and experts from across the country. Take, for example, what Michael Bach, executive director of the Canadian Association of Community Living, had to say. He stated:

We think the key findings and messages of the labour market panel—that the private sector is interested in hiring people with disabilities; that working age people with...disabilities are "ready, willing and able" to work; and that effective community partnerships are now needed to put the pieces together is exactly the formula we need in Canada to ensure an inclusive and efficient labour force. The time is right to move on the directions outlined in the report and in the Motion—building on what we know works, innovation in the private and public sectors, a focus on youth transitions, and getting value for federal investments are key to closing the labour market gap for people with disabilities in this country.

My motion is intended to capture and build on the momentum, which was palpable and was felt across the organizations as we met with them to craft this motion to address the issues they brought to us, that attention to employment issues for persons with disabilities is currently garnering on the national stage.

● (1810)

It is to move the yardsticks further. It does not contain all of the answers but certainly aims, again, to move us forward as much as we possibly can.

Again, the dream is tens of thousands of companies recognizing the value, the business case, for hiring a person with a disability.

I hope I can count on all members of this House to support the motion.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Manon Perreault (Montcalm, NDP): Mr. Speaker, although I truly appreciate that my colleague from Brant is willing to break down the barriers, myths and stigmas of hiring people with disabilities, I would like to know why his motion does not propose measures for housing, transportation and income security.

These are problems, and they are challenges that people with disabilities struggle with every day. It is part of the United Nations convention, which our government signed, but we have yet to see anything come out of it.

Am I to assume that my Conservative colleague honestly believes that those issues have nothing to do with the employability of people with disabilities?

• (1815)

[*English*]

Mr. Phil McColeman: Mr. Speaker, as I said at the end of my speech, this is not the answer to all the issues. As she well knows, and as I well know in my life experiences having worked for 24 years in volunteer work with many families, there are multiple issues that persons with disabilities have to deal with. Obviously, she has mentioned a couple.

The motion is intended to give hope, to give people who are currently sitting at home waiting for an opportunity to experience the self-worth of having a job. I mentioned in my introductory remarks some of the individuals who are truly inspirational in Canada and who are wonderful role models; this motion is intended to give them the chance to have that wonderful sense of worth that happens to people when they are employed. That is what the motion is all about.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. friend for raising this issue. I have been approached so many times by people with disabilities who have a very hard time entering the labour market.

Would the member be very specific about how the motion would motivate employers to actually recognize the potential, the worth and the value of people with disabilities who could be employed with them?

Mr. Phil McColeman: Mr. Speaker, it is a very good question.

During the time we have spent putting this together, a great momentum has been building in Canada in the private sector. There are individuals such as Mark Wafer who owns numerous Tim Hortons franchises and employs over 70 persons with disabilities in the Toronto area. There is the head of HR for Loblaws. Loblaws has a mandate now within its company policies that it shall, at every opportunity, put priorities on interviewing people when jobs become available and looking at persons with disabilities. There is this wonderful momentum. Often it is peer to peer. It is one businessperson telling another businessperson. That is what Mark Wafer has done, at the level of Rotary. He is a Rotarian. He has a wonderful message that he delivers across the country. He matches businessperson to businessperson to talk about the wonderful experiences. We intend to build on that momentum.

The report from the panel is the real starting point, the real platform. We can make a difference with that.

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the items talks about youth and the need for youth employment for those with disabilities, under the youth employment strategy.

Could the member share why it is important to focus in on youth with disabilities?

Private Members' Business

Mr. Phil McColeman: Mr. Speaker, we were told over and over again by the experts from across the country in the different groups that represented the whole spectrum of persons with disabilities that probably the most significant thing we could do would be to assist young people who were in that high school age to do volunteer work, to get involved in the community and be part of some volunteer part-time work and to learn about the opportunities out there.

Once they graduate and become young adults and those opportunities do not happen, they will have far less chance of entering the workforce than young people who are engaged.

It is a hugely significant feature of this motion. It is one that we want to be sure educators understand.

• (1820)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Manon Perreault (Montcalm, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first I want to follow up on the hon. member's comments. Earlier, he said that he has been doing volunteer work with persons with disabilities for 25 years. I just want him to know that I have been in a wheelchair for almost that long. I am familiar with the issues and I know what I am talking about.

I am pleased to rise today to speak to Motion No. 430 on labour market opportunities for persons with disabilities. I am taking this opportunity to salute the member's commitment and to draw the attention of the House to this critical issue. I really appreciate the hon. member's work.

I can say from the outset that we will support this motion.

That said, I have some doubts and some questions about the motion. I cannot help but be somewhat skeptical, given the government's record on this issue.

After all, the Conservatives have been dragging their feet since they took office. They have not tackled head on the issue of disproportionate unemployment and underemployment for Canadians living with functional limitations.

This motion is a step in the right direction, and I approve it. However, I do not think it is enough after all these years of being in government.

Let us begin by taking a look at the wording of the motion. The motion asks the government to endorse the report of the Panel on Labour Market Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities entitled "Rethinking disAbility in the Private Sector", and its findings, and to support other measures based on the panel's findings to promote employment opportunities for Canadians with disabilities.

Private Members' Business

Let us first talk about the panel's main findings, to which the motion often refers. We are told that close to 800,000 persons with disabilities are able to work and that about half of them have post-secondary education; that when businesses hire persons with disabilities, special arrangements are not made in 57% of the cases. When special arrangements are required, the average cost to the business is only \$500. The report also says that there is a strong will to hire persons with disabilities, but that more education and training are necessary for businesses to understand how to overcome obstacles and implement their ideas; that the example must come from the top and that actions by business leaders are absolutely necessary; that mental disabilities are particularly problematic because employees are reluctant to disclose such handicaps to obtain special arrangements from employers.

Other findings in the report include the following: hiring persons with disabilities makes good business sense; myths and preconceived ideas still exist in the business community regarding the costs and risks related to the hiring of persons with disabilities.

Come on. Was the government really so ill-informed? The answer is no. These are open secrets.

Even though many studies on this issue have been conducted by committees of the House, most of the recommendations have never been implemented. The barriers to employment of people with disabilities were identified a number of years ago.

Everyone agrees that the report of the special group contains good suggestions for employers and encourages them to hire people with disabilities. However, is that enough after all these years?

For the reasons I just mentioned, this report simply ignores the important role that the federal government plays in the fight against inequality in the workforce.

This report is sorely lacking because it does not examine job stability, flexible scheduling, the notion of high-quality jobs, health and disability benefits, transportation, housing, income security and so much more.

These are all issues that we talked about with witnesses during the study in committee that took place over the course of a few weeks. However, there is no trace of these considerations in a report based on all these consultations.

I wonder why the report of the working group is addressed only to Canadian business leaders. Why was the working group not mandated to make recommendations to the government? If we make the effort to study an issue, it is because we want to come up with recommendations.

It is not hard to guess why: the Conservatives are relying on the private sector and the provinces and territories, which undermines the federal government's role as the catalyst for change in this file.

For years, organizations that represent Canadians with disabilities have been asking the government to adopt a comprehensive strategy to improve the representation of people with disabilities in the workforce. This motion and the report's conclusions to which it refers do not constitute such a strategy.

The motion also refers to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Need I remind members of the Conservatives' poor record in that regard? We are still waiting for this much touted report.

● (1825)

We are also still waiting for the first follow-up report to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which is over a year late. The government has also not appointed an internal oversight body to monitor implementation, which could simply have been the Canadian Human Rights Commission. What is more, the government did not sign the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

When he appeared before the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities on February 28, Laurie Beachell, from the Council of Canadians with Disabilities, even said that the government did not yet issue its first report to the United Nations. He added that, having signed the convention, Canada is obligated to provide that report. He said that the council was still waiting for the report and that he was disappointed about not having two things. The council does not have a strategy for how it is going to move forward and use this document. While new policy initiatives are going forward, the council believes that, in some cases, they are not being measured against the convention.

With respect to the existing policies and programs the motion refers to, they contain many gaps and inadequacies, lack coordination with provincial programs and services, and do not include proper performance measures or measurable objectives. A comprehensive assessment of those policies and programs must be done before we go any further on this.

The motion and the panel report both fail to take into account people who have complex needs or multiple disabilities or who must overcome multiple forms of discrimination. I am referring, for instance, to women or first nations people with disabilities. In short, no initiatives or support measures have been proposed for these people. No solutions have been suggested to correct problems with income security programs, which are full of employment disincentives. Am I to presume that the private sector will take care of this problem on behalf of the federal government?

The motion also fails to take into account issues of education, employment and social assistance that specifically affect working age women with disabilities, who are more likely than men to live in a low-income household. Nor are there any measures for first nations populations, who already face considerable obstacles, including severe limitations on their access to transportation, education, communications and health services. The rate of disability among this group is roughly double the Canadian average.

The government therefore needs to clearly state that it intends to work in partnership with the provinces and territories, first nations and people with disabilities in order to come up with an implementation plan for Canada, in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Private Members' Business

Consequently, this motion is a step in the right direction. Of course, I will be supporting it, and I am pleased by my colleague's efforts. However, we want to see more done to change the situation. Although the motion has merit, it is just a first step, and we must go further. The representation of disabled people in the workforce has stagnated over the past 30 years. It is time to change that and truly give them access to the labour market and a decent standard of living. This motion is the first step to getting there.

I would like to remind my colleague and the other members of the House that after 23 years in a wheelchair, I know what I am talking about. Obviously, I know the issues involved in trying to get into the workforce. One major issue is transportation. Para transit service often covers only a small area. That is one major issue. Another major issue is finding housing close to work, which is related to transportation.

That said, I appreciate a number of the elements in my colleague's motion. However, I would like to point out that despite his good intentions, his motion lacks depth. I really hope that we can go a bit further in studying this.

[*English*]

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to speak on the motion before us today.

I want to recognize my colleague from Montcalm for her contribution to the human resources and skills development committee.

I also want to recognize and commend my colleague from Brant for bringing this motion forward. As he indicated, we did a study on this particular area, and I think there will be some good things that will arise from the study. However, he has been a long-time advocate for persons with disabilities, and I want to recognize his contribution to the committee as well as the equity he holds in his opinion on these matters.

My younger brother had cerebral palsy, and my mom was the advocate in my household. The challenges we have now are certainly different from the ones she would have experienced and come up against in trying to raise into adulthood a young handicapped son in the 1960s. As well, my two sisters both work at an adult workshop, CAPE Society, in Glace Bay. One sister is a director, and she has been there a number of years, and as well my sister Darlene has probably been with CAPE for 20 years, so the issue of physical and intellectual disabilities has been part of our kitchen table talk for a lot of years.

I think if this motion could be deemed as one thing, it would certainly be a step in the right direction. The Liberal Party will be supporting this motion.

Ensuring the rights of persons with disabilities are protected from discrimination or respected to be given an equal opportunity to provide for themselves or their families is something that the Liberals have always fought for. I am proud to be a member of the party that gave Canada the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms that guaranteed "equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination...". This was given to individuals in Canada with mental and physical disabilities.

I am proud that our party was also responsible for the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Employment Equity Act. These important pieces of legislation created rights for persons with disabilities, but we need to do more to ensure Canadians with disabilities have equal opportunities to employment to provide for themselves and their families.

Part of the solution is having a rounded approach to the issues that most affect persons with disabilities, such as poverty, transportation, housing and a long-term employment plan. As I indicated, we are in the throes of concluding a study on employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. Several witnesses spoke to the points of poverty, transportation and housing, and they said that enhancing opportunities of employment for persons with disabilities cannot be discussed in isolation of other policies or barriers that act as disincentives to work.

Dr. David Lepofsky, chair of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act Alliance, said:

Don't think about employment in isolation. We've got to tackle the barriers across the board. Transit, education, and employment must all be tackled together. The same barriers hurt in all contexts.

● (1830)

Laurie Beachell, the national coordinator for the Council of Canadians with Disabilities, spoke about a long-term employment plan. She said:

We would call on the Government of Canada, and on [the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development] specifically, to develop a five-year strategic plan to address employment needs of people with disabilities. One-off single-issue one-community measures will simply not get us where we hope to be.

The problem has never been that we do not know enough about an issue to do anything. More so, it is about political will.

The panel's report brought to light startling myths about employing a disabled person. In 57% of cases there is no cost to accommodate disabled persons. Sometimes we hear employers saying that the costs around accommodation are too great. In 37% of the cases, the average cost of accommodation is below \$500.

We find from the report that just below 800,000 working-age Canadians with disabilities who are able to work do not work. We also know almost half have post-secondary education.

We are failing as a society, and there is a cost to us all, economically and socially.

The panel's report challenges employers to lead. We have received great testimony. It has been indicated that Tim Hortons has really seized this challenge of growing its workforce with persons with challenges. We recognize that Tim Hortons has taken on big issues before, such as with smoking. The Liberal government at the time stepped up and did so much to ensure that laws were in place and advertising around smoking in public places. However, Tim Hortons stepped up as well, ahead of most other restaurants, to try to accommodate some smokers. It had the smoking rooms first and then just banned it outright.

Private Members' Business

We know that real substantive and effective change has to come from the federal government as well. We heard some real ideas to help persons with disabilities. One area that was brought up a number of times was EI.

Carmela Hutchison, the president of the DisAbled Women's Network Canada, said:

People with episodic and chronic illnesses often do not have enough time to qualify for benefits. There's a lack of flexible supports for chronic illnesses not deemed severe enough. Very often we see people who are struggling to maintain employment while undergoing cancer treatment, or they have MS and again they're struggling. If they take a lighter schedule, then their funding for their disability is cut to that lighter schedule. Other people have talked about being considered too disabled for one program or not disabled enough for another.

Laurie Beachell, from the Council of Canadians with Disabilities, said:

EI has a real problem with those people who have episodic disabilities, mental health concerns, MS, those people who are well at periods of time in their life and can work, and then cannot work at certain times.

One program that my colleague had talked about was the youth employment strategy and the skills link, in particular. Back before the government took power, that skills link program portion of the youth employment strategy had accommodated 32,000 Canadians with disabilities. Now it accommodates 12,000. It is one thing to have the programs, but at one time these programs served more and they should going forward.

I want to share with the House and the member for Brant that the Liberal Party will support his motion. We hope the government sees this as a call to action and moves on these recommendations.

• (1835)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege for me to rise in support of my colleague's motion to endorse the report "Rethinking DisAbility in the Private Sector" by the panel on labour market opportunities for persons with disabilities.

The motion could not come at a better time. Like all industrialized nations, Canada is facing a demographic challenge to our labour force. There is an existing skills gap and the retirement of the baby boomers has yet to start in earnest. The skills shortage has been characterized as the most serious economic issue of our time by both the Prime Minister and the Canadian Chamber of Commerce. To illustrate this problem, let me give a few examples.

There are about 800,000 working-age Canadians with disabilities who are currently not working, even though their disability should not prevent them from being employable. Of these, almost half of them have post-secondary education, yet the participation rate for working-age people with disabilities in the labour market is just under 60%, compared to working-age Canadians at 80%. This means that even with the large number of job vacancies the unemployment rate among disabled remains very high.

We have all heard stories about businesses that are struggling because they cannot find workers with the right skill sets. Many of us know qualified people with disabilities who cannot find work.

When members of the panel on labour market opportunities for persons with disabilities consulted across the country to prepare the report, they interviewed employers from businesses of all sizes and

from a broad range of industry sectors. What they found was that most Canadians showed a genuine desire to hire people with disabilities. They get it because they have seen the positive results that hiring people with disabilities brings, both in terms of company culture and increasing their bottom line. When a person with a disability gets a job they get more than a paycheque. They get a boost to their dignity and independence.

The employer gets something too. People with disabilities are value-added employees. Take the Tim Hortons franchise in Toronto. In an industry where the turnover rate for regular employees is 75%, the turnover rate in this franchise is only 35%.

The panel's report has a story of a private technology company in which people with disabilities account for more than 50% of the workforce. These employees are helping the company to thrive. People with disabilities can give businesses a distinct advantage over their competitors.

Since Motion No. 430 was announced, support has poured in from many sources, from individuals and businesses, large and small. For example, let me quote Chris McIntosh, who is a software developer who has been diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome. When Chris heard about the motion, he said, "People want meaning in their lives. They spend so much of their lives at work. Employers who provide meaning to their employees have a motivated and loyal workforce and nothing is more meaningful than changing the life of another person."

Yet the myths persist. Some think that hiring people with disabilities is expensive, and this is totally false. It often costs little or next to nothing to accommodate someone who has a disability. The panel's report cites that in 37% of the cases where there was a one-time cost to accommodate an employee with a disability, the average amount spent adapting the workspace was only \$500.

The motion calls for additional initiatives that would build on this support. They include a new focus on young people with disabilities through programs like the youth employment strategy and improvements to existing labour market agreements, along with new approaches to ensure that our programs are adaptable.

We need to be able to capitalize on innovative strategies happening at the community level across the country. In economic action plan 2013, our government has begun to address some of the aspects raised in the motion.

• (1840)

The budget announced a new generation of labour market agreements for persons with disabilities by 2014. These new agreements will be designed to better meet employers' needs in Canadian businesses and to improve the employment prospects for persons with disabilities.

Private Members' Business

Economic action plan 2013 also proposes maintaining ongoing funding for the opportunities fund for people with disabilities, starting in 2015-16. The budget also proposed that employers and community organizations be involved in the project design and delivery of the fund. It is important to ensure that training solutions are more responsive to labour market needs. This will help people with disabilities gain the hands-on experience they need to fully participate in the labour market. These two measures were taken to help people with disabilities have job opportunities.

Other measures were also announced in Canada's economic action plan. Additional funding will be provided through the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, some of which will support research related to the labour market participation of people with disabilities.

The creation of a Canadian employers disability forum was announced, as recommended by the panel. The forum, an initiative led by a number of Canadian businesses, including Loblaws, will be managed by employers for employers. It will facilitate the education, training and sharing of resources and best practices concerning the hiring and retention of persons with disabilities. Under the leadership of the forum, employers will help promote and further the invaluable contributions persons with disabilities can make to their businesses.

Finally, the budget announced an extension of the enabling accessibility fund on an ongoing basis to support the capital costs of construction and renovations to improve physical accessibility for people with disabilities. Unfortunately, the opposition parties chose to play political games and voted against that initiative. It is unfortunate that the NDP and Liberals cannot support these great investments and programs for persons with disabilities who need to find meaningful employment.

There is more to be done. In particular, we must change our focus to increase awareness among the owners of small- and medium-sized businesses.

As I said earlier, the introduction of this motion could not be more timely. We are at a pivotal moment in Canada when it comes to our workforce. With baby boomers starting to retire, we need to ensure that all of our talent is at work contributing to continued prosperity. Part of addressing this issue involves investing in people, people with disabilities, so that they can reach their full potential. This includes strategies to attract and retain people from under-represented groups, such as people with disabilities.

In a report by the OECD Business and Industry Advisory Committee published this year, the committee said:

With aging populations and emerging skills shortages, effective talent management is a dominant business issue, and a strategic imperative.

We urge businesses of all sizes to step up to the plate and consider new sources of labour as part of their human resources strategy. I was delighted to see that the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities is conducting a study entitled "Exploring Employment Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities".

In conclusion, I would like to congratulate the member for Brant for taking the initiative and introducing this motion. I would also like

to thank the members of the panel on labour market opportunities for persons with disabilities for a job well done.

Finally, I would like to ask all members of the opposition parties to put aside political games. It is unfortunate that they voted against the investments that would help Canadians with disabilities fully participate in our economy, and I hope they can find it in their hearts to support this member's motion.

• (1845)

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I wish to begin my comments on Motion No. 430 by sharing, in his own words, the personal challenges of my friend Rupan Sambasivam, an inspiring young Saskatchewan high school honour student.

There is a lot of issues concerning people who might have a disability and their chances of getting employment. Right now, am in grade 12, with Cerebral Palsy and I am taking a Career Exploration class. I cannot use my hands very well therefore this limits my career choices. That is one of many obstacles in my way, as I get older and look for a career that suits me. Transportation is also a big concern especially in the winter. I cannot drive so I need to look for different ways of getting where I need to go.

While I was a child, I had many support systems such as adaptive technology, physiotherapy, occupational therapy and grants from children's charities. All my medications were paid for by the health care system. I have had terrific support at my schools. My transportation was supplied by the school. I cannot write so I need an Educational Assistant to help me. If it wasn't for them I would not be where I am today. All of my teachers, all through my public education have been wonderful and some of them have adapted assignments or activities for me. I have a laptop and adaptive hardware & software in my school. I also had specially built furniture to suit my needs. I didn't have to pay for any of this. Saskatchewan Abilities Council has also supported me and they continue to help me participate in their recreation services, all at little or no cost to me. I feel very grateful that I have all these resources for me to succeed.

When I turn 18 this month, some of these services will no longer be available to me—at least not for free. I will be considered an adult and will have to find and pay for services like transportation, medications, some of my therapies and the technologies I need. Some day I will have to live away from home. If I don't have a job I don't know how I will pay for basic needs as I get older.

Employers have to be accommodating to employees with disabilities. Depending on the job, I would need special hardware & software to allow me to access a computer. This is something an employer could do to make it possible for me to work. They need to understand that I have a right to work even though I am disabled. They should not pay me less because I have a disability. Employers & co-workers might need training to learn how to adapt to working with a disabled person.

Governments should see that everyone should be treated equally. If we need special equipment or resources to do a job, they could help by providing an allowance for transportation if we can't drive. They could help employers with the cost of job adaptations and equipment. Governments can provide funding to run training for employers & workers that could help them to understand special needs.

I hope I have a bright future ahead of me. I want to be a journalist and I know that I will have to attend post-secondary. When I am done my schooling I hope there will be sufficient resources to allow me to join the workplace. Thank you.

Rupan Sambasivam

Clearly we have an obligation to reach out to more people with disabilities to improve their employment outcomes and enable them to contribute fully to their communities and to the economy.

Private Members' Business

For example, one of my constituents who will be 50 this year remained unemployed for many years until he was able to receive funding to obtain employment skills. After far too many years desiring useful employment, he finally found a job with training where he remained a contributing employee for 14 years, a remarkable achievement for him and the dedicated staff who support him.

Employment outcomes for people with disabilities would be far more bleak were it not for non-profit organizations, including in my riding AdaptAbilities and EmployAbilities.

AdaptAbilities provides day programming to help youth develop employable skills. However, similar to other not-for-profit groups whose goal is assisting those marginalized, they struggle to find funding. I have participated in its annual fundraising games and walks where it cheerfully organizes and supported the events through the staff, volunteers and parents to ensure that these children benefit from the programming.

EmployAbilities is another Edmonton non-profit organization that has served people with disabilities and barriers to employment and employers since 1974. Its goal is inclusion and opportunity for Albertans with disabilities through career information and job placement services.

We should applaud the dedicated work of these volunteers in our communities, who are filling a void left by both government and the private sector.

The government has lauded its skills training programs, but we have heard little mention in the budget of intensified government investment in enabling disabled Canadians with policies ensuring greater flexibility, training, transport or accommodation for the disabled.

● (1850)

Where, for example, can we find, in the reforms to employment insurance, the consideration to the supports and services required by a disabled woman living in an isolated community, or on a reserve, who has lost her job and is now expected to travel 30 kilometres to work?

The question before us is this: does this motion fully address the critical remaining roadblocks to equality and access to training opportunities and the workplace? Is this just another public program we should be downloading to the private sector?

The motion is well-meaning, and the volunteer efforts of the member are absolutely laudable. It is almost entirely focused on the private sector and what it should be doing alone or in partnership with governments. Yes, business does have a role to play, and those who invested in special training for disabled workers should be lauded.

Studies and reports have already been funded on what the private sector can do. What about government? Why no call for the government to finally step up and deliver on its languishing domestic and international commitments? Why no call for action by the government on the myriad recommendations in the 2008 standing committee report, including new tax incentives to employ disabled,

school-to-work transition plans for disabled youth and special attention to disabled aboriginal Canadians?

As the motion mentions, Canada did ratify the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. However, ratifying delivers nothing concrete, and the government's record on implementation is dismal. Its follow-up report is over a year delayed. It has failed to appoint an internal monitoring agency. It has refused to sign the Optional Protocol. It has failed to institute any basic indicators of progress.

In 2006, Statistics Canada reported that 2.5 million, or 11.5%, of Canadians age 15 to 64 report some form of disability. They also forecast that as our population ages, the percentage will rise. Sadly, the highest rate of disability is among aboriginal Canadians, 31%. It is not clear if those figures include challenges faced by those suffering mental conditions or homelessness as well.

It is reported that adults with disabilities without higher education are the least likely to be able to find employment, certainly that provides a living wage. Even those able to achieve higher education have almost half the chance to be employed.

These inequities in access to education and training and employment were revealed to the House as far back as 2008, and the response was that another study was under way.

The call in this motion is for a youth employment strategy. It echoes repeated calls by the New Democrats. I would support it, presuming it included targeted attention to the disabled, but the call for greater accountability must also be extended to the government for deeper action on its promises and commitments.

● (1855)

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to Motion No. 430 this evening. I want to congratulate the member for Brant for bringing this forward.

I was listening to the speech, and I think the important part of today's motion is that we are endorsing and supporting the panel on labour market opportunities for persons with disabilities. We do require the private sector to come to the table to help with these individuals and their opportunities.

I have had a number of opportunities in my day, but one of them was to work for Easter Seals Ontario, which is a charitable organization that helps disabled youth up to the age of 18. My wife works for them now as a development officer, raising money for their needs. I completely agree with the mover of this motion that we need to help these young people find opportunities. As an employee there, I met many young people and their families. I continue to meet these young people, not just in my riding but across Ontario.

There is huge potential for success, if we can get not just the government but the private sector on board in terms of recognizing the opportunity, not just for the individual who has the disability but also for the business. We have seen statistics about rates of people not showing up for work. The disabled do a much better job of coming to work every single day over others.

This is a great opportunity for business to take advantage of. It is an opportunity for those young people. I support this motion wholeheartedly.

The Deputy Speaker: When the debate resumes on this matter, the member will have eight minutes, if he wishes to continue.

• (1900)

[*Translation*]

The time provided for consideration of private members' business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the order paper.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*English*]

HUMAN RESOURCES AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT CANADA

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to continue to try to shed some light on an issue that has impacted a great number of Canadians.

It has been six months since we saw one of the single largest data breaches in the history of this country. Approximately 600,000 Canadians had their private information exposed by the government's mishandling of their data. Certainly we have seen enough cases of people having their identities stolen. Their identities have gotten into the hands of people who are not good people at all. Lives have been ruined once this data has been in the wrong hands.

With that kind of information about 600,000 Canadians out there, mainly through the student loan program, there has been a great deal of concern. My office has handled many enquiries as to just where this issue stands. I stand today to try to get some kind of clarification.

It was two months before the minister came clean with Canadians and let them know that this data had been breached. She said at the time, and every time we asked her in the House, that she took the matter very seriously and that she was very concerned. I am sure it will be reiterated in the parliamentary secretary's comments today. However, the minister also said at that time that they were working with external partners to ensure that Canadians were made aware of the data loss.

I would ask the current parliamentary secretary if he could share with me who those external partners are and how many of the 600,000 have been notified. Those are two simple questions. The government should have those answers now. Does the parliamentary secretary believe that the government is being successful in contacting the people affected?

Adjournment Proceedings

How many people have signed up for the security alerts through Equifax? I know that both TransUnion and Equifax provide security alert measures. The government only went with Equifax because there was no charge with the Equifax deal.

Could the member enlighten us on those particular issues?

Hon. Mike Lake (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend from Cape Breton—Canso brought forward a question regarding the privacy breach.

Let me be clear that this loss by the department is completely unacceptable. The Office of the Privacy Commissioner has been notified and an investigation into the incident is under way.

The hard drive contained the personal data of 583,000 Canada student loan borrowers who were approved for loans mainly between the years 2000 and 2006. The minister has instructed departmental officials to take immediate action to prevent such a situation from recurring.

Letters have been sent to affected clients. We are letting them know what steps they can take to help protect their personal information and to minimize the potential impact of this incident. Among other things, credit protection is being provided to the clients affected. These services are offered by Equifax, a credit bureau, for a period of up to six years.

Their social insurance numbers are also being monitored. In addition, we made active public notification efforts through the media, provided toll-free numbers and posted information on social media accounts and government websites, such as those for HRSDC and canlearn.ca.

Following directives from the minister, the department took rigorous action to strengthen and improve the overall policy and related protocols on security and storage of personal information. This is accountability.

New measures include the prohibition of portable hard drives in the department. Unapproved USB keys are being banned from being connected to the department's network. New data loss prevention technology is being developed to control or prevent the transfer of sensitive information. Mandatory training for all employees regarding the proper handling of sensitive data is being implemented. As part of this policy, penalties for non-compliance have been increased, up to termination of employment.

• (1905)

[*Translation*]

The Department of Human Resources and Skills Development has taken significant action to remedy the situation, and it will continue to report on measures that are implemented. That is taking responsibility.

[*English*]

The protection and security of personal information is fundamental to the ability of the government to deliver services. The Canadian public has to be able to trust departments to take all the necessary precautions when handling their personal information. We are ensuring that proper accountability and policies are in place to ensure that this happens.

Adjournment Proceedings

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Mr. Speaker, next week it will be six months since the breach occurred. I heard nothing in the parliamentary secretary's answer that even alluded to how many people had been notified.

We are trying to get some kind of comfort for the 600,000 people who were involved in this issue. Could he share with the House whether there any criminal intent behind the loss of this information?

Hon. Mike Lake: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Cape Breton—Canso accused the minister of not being accountable following this privacy breach and questioned the timelines related to this incident.

As I previously mentioned, our government is taking action. We have put in place stricter security protocols to prevent similar situations from happening again.

Officials have been instructed to implement disciplinary measures for staff up to and including termination, should the strict codes of privacy and security not be followed.

We are monitoring their social insurance numbers, offering credit protection by Equifax over a period of six years, offering dedicated toll-free lines to answer questions, and making public announcements and posting information on various websites. That is being accountable.

We are acting to ensure that this does not happen again in the future.

[*Translation*]

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to have an opportunity to return to a question I raised on February 1, when I asked the Minister of Industry to clarify his government's plans for National Research Council Canada.

For a long time, the National Research Council has been showing the way for progress in science and research in Canada, but the underhanded changes made by the Conservatives threaten to eclipse this venerable institution.

In budget 2013, we see that National Research Council Canada will receive \$121 million to continue its restructuring. Despite the insistence of the opposition and key figures in industry, however, and despite the innumerable questions the NDP has asked during committee meetings, it is impossible to determine the government's overall plan for the NRC.

The minister cannot really tell us that he wants to reorient the organization to suit the needs of business. More detail is required before the funding is approved.

What lines will be dropped? We already know that magnetic resonance is no longer in this government's plans.

What are the other areas that will be dropped? How many research institutions will be closed?

We still do not know what will become of the 1,000 scientists who work at NRC. How many scientists will be laid off? I am eager to see whether the minister can at least answer that question shortly.

A number of changes in philosophy imposed on the institution are already causing frustration. For example, the Minister of State for Science and Technology has stated publicly that he wanted the NRC to become a single toll-free window, a concierge service for industry.

Is that the goal of the minister responsible for the NRC: to transform it into industry's sidekick?

NRCC also has to give up peer-reviewed articles as success indicators, as confirmed by its President, John McDougall, appearing before the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology—another disturbing example of how the institution is moving away from its roots, whereas its mandate is supposedly being recentered.

Scientists have good reason not to trust this government, which on 20 March 2013 rejected an NDP motion calling upon the Conservative government, among other things, to recognize the importance of public science and fundamental research. Canadians were shocked to see the Prime Minister rising in this House to vote against science.

How can we reject the principle of public science, and disparage fundamental research? Yet this is what the Conservatives did by voting against our motion.

Last month, together with the official opposition's science and technology critic, I attended a series of meetings with senior U.S. officials in Washington to discuss science policy.

We were able to note that unlike the Conservative government, the Americans, both in the public sector and in the private sector, are making huge investments in science.

While Canada devotes 1.8% of its gross domestic product to research and development, our neighbours to the south are now investing 3% of their GDP in research and development. That is almost double, taking into consideration the relative size of our economies.

I believe Canadians expect better of this Conservative government.

● (1910)

[*English*]

Hon. Mike Lake (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government has consistently demonstrated a strong commitment to science and technology. Guided by Canada's federal science and technology strategy, mobilizing science and technology to Canada's advantage, the federal government has introduced sustained investments to strengthen Canada's position in the world as a leading supporter of research.

Since 2006, the federal government has invested more than \$9 billion in funding for science, technology and the growth of innovative businesses. These investments have helped to support world-class Canadian research and help us achieve key social goals, such as improving public health, building a strong and vibrant economy and ensuring a clean and healthy environment for future generations.

Adjournment Proceedings

Back in 2011, Mr. Tom Jenkins led an expert panel to review federal support to R and D to improve contributions to innovation and economic opportunities for business. This panel recommended a new approach to supporting innovation in Canada, including the pursuit of initiatives that focused resources on better meeting private sector needs.

[Translation]

To support this approach, economic action plan 2013 will provide \$121 million over two years for the strategic orientation of National Research Council Canada to help innovative enterprises grow in Canada.

As we know, NRCC was established in 1916 to support research and the development of commercial innovation. It has made an important contribution to the Canadian economy by supporting the development of innovations such as the cardiac pacemaker and computer-assisted animation technology, which have generated high-value-added jobs.

[English]

To improve Canada's economic performance, the NRC is working together with other players in Canada's innovation system, including academia, and the public and private sectors. As an organization linking these sectors together to advance commercialization, the NRC is adapting to business research needs by concentrating on active, business-driven, industry-relevant research.

The government continues to take action in line with the panel's recommendations. Economic action plan 2013 proposes to provide \$20 million over three years for a new pilot program to be delivered through NRC's industrial research assistance program. This would enable hundreds of small- and medium-sized enterprises to commercialize their products or services more quickly and effectively by providing them with credit notes to help pay for research, technology and business development services at universities, colleges and other non-profit research institutions of their choice.

Also, to help enhance innovation hubs that foster entrepreneurial talent and ideas, economic action plan 2013 proposes \$60 million over five years to help outstanding, high-potential incubator and accelerator organizations in Canada expand their services to entrepreneurs and a further \$100 million through the Business Development Bank of Canada to invest in firms graduating from business accelerators.

This builds upon previous investments through budget 2012 to double R and D support to small- and medium-sized companies through IRAP. Some \$67 million was provided in 2012-13 to support the NRC in refocusing its efforts toward business-driven, industry-relevant applied research that would help Canadian businesses develop innovative products and services.

In fact, another \$1.1 billion over five years was announced in economic action plan 2012 for direct research and development support.

Taken together, federal expenditures on science and technology are projected to reach nearly \$11 billion in 2012-13.

●(1915)

[Translation]

Ms. Laurin Liu: Mr. Speaker, to reach their figure of \$9 billion, they have shown a great deal of creativity.

It is nonsense, and the government is taking Canadians for fools. The Conservative government may well brag about having invested more money in science than any other government, but the facts say otherwise.

The most recent report from Statistics Canada confirms that last year, the Conservative government applied a 6% cut to funding for science and technology, and laid off 1,500 employees involved in scientific and technological activity.

Returning to the question of fundamental research, I will remind the Conservatives that the Jenkins report recommended that NRCC institutes doing fundamental research become affiliated with one or more universities.

However, with persistent cuts in fundamental research capacity everywhere in Canada, it is difficult to find concrete evidence that the government is making provision for fundamental research.

Our government should be investing for the long term, but unfortunately it lacks vision.

[English]

Hon. Mike Lake: Mr. Speaker, this government has consistently demonstrated a strong commitment to science and technology. We are proud of the work of scientists at the NRC and in other departments and have made important investments to support their research. These investments have helped to attract and retain talent, support excellence in science, bring discoveries and innovation to the marketplace, and build science and technology infrastructure.

I will quickly point to just a few of our recent successes.

Last fall, the National Research Council of Canada flew the world's first civilian jet powered by 100% biofuel.

Last year, Canada's National Laboratory for Particle and Nuclear Physics, TRIUMF, played a role in supporting the discovery the Higgs boson subatomic particle.

More recently, astronaut Chris Hadfield became the first Canadian ever to take command of the International Space Station.

To improve Canada's economic performance, the NRC has been provided with \$121 million, over two years, to support its transformation to focus on business-driven, industry-relevant research.

Adjournment Proceedings

To conclude, the government is extremely proud of the world-class work that our scientists and researchers do. They help us achieve key goals, such as improving public health, ensuring safety of foods and products, building strong and vibrant economies across the nation and ensuring a clean and healthy environment.

[*Translation*]

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

(The House adjourned at 7:19 p.m.)

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