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(HANSARD)

Monday, June 3, 2013

—

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, June 3, 2013

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayers

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

•(1100)

[English]

KOREAN WAR VETERANS DAY ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill S-213, An Act respecting a national day of remembrance to honour Canadian veterans of the Korean War, as reported (without amendment) from the committee.

The Speaker: There being no motions at report stage, the House will now proceed, without debate, to the putting of the question on the motion to concur in the bill at report stage.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Wetaskiwin, CPC) moved that the bill be concurred in.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

The Speaker: When shall the bill be read the third time? By leave, now?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Blaine Calkins moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

Ms. Eve Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I welcome this chance to rise in the House in support of Bill S-213. As each one of us knows, respect for Canada's veterans unites our country as few other things can. We see it in this chamber every day, regardless of where we sit in the House or where we find ourselves on the political spectrum. Each of us understands the role of Canada's veterans, that incredibly important role veterans have played in building our great nation, not only by wearing our country's uniform but by being leaders and active members of our communities.

Canada's veterans are role models. They are men and women who have taught us the real meaning of character and courage, the real meaning of service and sacrifice.

I have thought about what we have debated regarding Bill S-213. As we have taken turns speaking, we have heard a lot about the Korean War. We know that more than 26,000 Canadians served during the war and that approximately 7,000 continued to serve in Korea after the armistice was signed in 1953. We have discovered that some Canadian troops were still boots on the ground in Korea as late as 1957, some seven years after the war began. We also know, sadly, that 516 Canadians made the ultimate sacrifice during the war.

From a more global perspective, we understand that the Korean War was an important early test for the fledgling United Nations. We know the course of history could have been very different if Canada and 15 other member states had not committed combat troops to the UN's multinational force. We also know that it was imperative for the free world to take action to stop the threat of tyranny and oppression and to defend the right of all peoples to live in peace and freedom.

We all understand this. We accept the facts as they are. We recognize the significant place the Korean War holds in our history, but in doing so, we must guard against losing sight of some of the more important aspects of Bill S-213. We must not allow ourselves to be numbed by too many numbers or too many facts and figures. Most of all, we must remember that Canada's role in the Korean War was ultimately written by the more than 26,000 individual Canadians who stepped forward, all with their own reasons and all with their own stories of service and sacrifice.

This is what I want to focus upon with the time I have left today. This is why Bill S-213 is important to me. We can recount all of the strategic details of many battles and events, and what happened between Hill 355 and Hill 277. We can talk about the dangerous skies over the Korean Peninsula and the perilous waters off its shores, but the real story rests with Canadians who served in a war so far from their home. Theirs is the story of courage, the story of being afraid but carrying on anyway, day after day.

Most of us cannot begin to fathom what it is like to be dug into the side of a hill at nightfall, with the enemy lurking just several hundred metres away in the dark. Most of us cannot begin to imagine what it was like to serve in an extreme climate that could vary from monsoon rains to blazing heat or bitter snow, or to march over the foreign terrain of endless hills, swamps and rice fields.

I am reminded of the words of Sergeant Denis Lapierre, of our Royal 22nd Regiment, and what he said following the battle for the icy slopes of Hill 355 in November, 1951. He said, "We were there to fight, and if need be, to die. And we did".

Private Members' Business

That is Canada's story in the Korean War, and it is told one person at a time. It is the story of Canadians who were cut down in the prime of their lives and families forever changed by a nation's loss, like Private Curtis Hayes, who never lived to see his twin girls, who were born after he had shipped out to Korea. His two girls grew up without knowing their father.

Canada's story is told through those who were wounded in body or soul or both, those who were never the same and those who were better for their service. It is told through Canadians who distinguish themselves, people like Tommy Prince, one of our most decorated aboriginal warriors. Prince was an Ojibwa from Manitoba who served in Korea with the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry. He needed only 13 words to explain his service: "As soon as I put on my uniform, I felt a better man".

• (1105)

That is what Bill S-213 really represents. It honours the very best of what it means to be Canadian. It recognizes that Canada's history in the Korean War is as proud, tragic and diverse as the individual Canadians who served. It ensures we will never forget their individual service and their personal sacrifice.

Without a doubt, we have heard at committee from veterans organizations and from veterans themselves that they are very proud of our government because we have taken action to ensure that the Korean War will never again be called the "forgotten war". Rather, each and every Korean veteran will be forever remembered for their commitment and sacrifice.

As I close, I would like to quote from a poem written by Pat O'Connor, a Canadian stretcher bearer who would die the next day while tending to our wounded and fallen soldiers. Pat O'Connor wrote:

There is blood on the hills of Korea
It's the gift of the freedom they love
May their names live in glory forever
And their souls rest in Heaven above.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Éline Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise in the House today in support of Bill S-213, An Act respecting a national day of remembrance to honour Canadian veterans of the Korean War.

This is an important bill intended to designate July 27 as Korean War veterans day nationwide.

I would further like to acknowledge the participation of my colleague from Sackville—Eastern Shore, the official opposition critic for veterans affairs, in the drafting of this bill. I also want to recognize the tremendous work he does every day with our brave Canadian veterans, as well as his sincere devotion to their cause.

I would also like to acknowledge the considerable work done by the member for Châteauguay—Saint-Constant as the deputy critic for veteran affairs. He is also very dedicated to this cause and works very hard on this. He was an excellent critic for this bill, and I want to express my appreciation for his efforts.

This is considered by many as the forgotten war, and to this day the great achievements and contributions of our brave Korean War veterans are still too often overlooked, yet, during this conflict, which lasted over three years, more than 26,000 Canadian soldiers joined the UN mission to help the South Korean people and stop this act of aggression by North Korea.

In this valiant struggle to defend democracy and freedom, 516 of these soldiers made the ultimate sacrifice by giving their lives, and of those who came home, many still bear physical and psychological scars that will never fully heal.

We must never forget their courage and dedication in the service of their country, as well as all the sacrifices that these men and women made to preserve peace in the world.

By marking July 27 as Korean War veterans day, we will help commemorate their bravery and honour them as they deserve.

I come from a military family, so Bill S-213 has a special meaning for me. My father is currently an active member of the Canadian army and my mother is a member of the Royal Canadian Navy reserve.

When I was a child, they started teaching me about the huge sacrifices made by members of Canada's military over the course of history, and they taught me that we have a duty to remember those sacrifices every single day, not just on November 11. That is an important date, but every day should be a day of commemoration.

My grandfather, Lieutenant Colonel Norbert LaViolette, also had a career in the armed forces and was among the Canadian veterans who participated in the UN mission in Korea.

Now, a few days before his 90th birthday, I have the privilege of hosting him on Parliament Hill and paying tribute to him to sincerely thank him for his military service during the Korean War and throughout his career.

Lieutenant Colonel LaViolette enrolled in the Canadian Officers' Training Corps at Université du Sacré-Coeur in Bathurst in 1941. He enrolled in the Royal Canadian Air Force in 1943 and then transferred to the supplementary reserve a few years later. When he realized that he was not particularly fond of airplanes, he enrolled in the Canadian army in 1950 and started studying mechanical engineering at the Nova Scotia Technical College.

He was deployed to South Korea in 1953 and stayed there for one year, making him one of the 7,000 Canadian soldiers who helped keep the peace after the armistice was signed.

When he participated in the UN mission in Korea, my grandfather was 27 years old and was a lieutenant with the Corps of Royal Canadian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers. His unit's role was to provide front-line maintenance support for Canadian vehicles and weaponry.

Private Members' Business

We all know that our soldiers are dedicated and that they honour human rights and Canadian values. Whenever possible, my grandfather and his colleagues tried to help the poorest people in the villages surrounding their base. It was hard for my grandfather to see these people suffering and to see all the destruction left behind by the North Korean soldiers, who even killed all of the male animals in the livestock herds so that the villagers could not renew their food source.

I am very proud of my grandfather's military service and everything he accomplished in Korea. Lucky for us, the only visible scars he came back with were a fear of snakes and such a bad memory of the taste of the water that he still avoids it to this day.

• (1110)

Lucky for us, he came home and raised his family. He is still with us today and will celebrate his 90th birthday on Thursday. However, not all of our soldiers were so lucky. We need to remember them and all of the sacrifices they made. We need to remember all those whose names are in the *Korean Book of Remembrance* in the Memorial Chamber within Parliament's Peace Tower. They sacrificed themselves for their country, and we need to pay tribute to them. Dedicating July 27 in their honour would be a wonderful way of doing just that.

However, we must also ensure that our veterans receive all the services they deserve after having given so much for their country in the service of democracy. I hope that they will get the support they need, as will Canadian Legions, which need help. They have a difficult time providing services for their members and even keeping their doors open, yet they play a key role in ensuring that members' service is not forgotten. Legions also serve as a meeting place, a place of community. They offer support and organize funerals for veterans.

Those are the kinds of things we need in this country in order to pay just tribute to veterans and take care of them once they return. Many of them left everything behind to take up arms when Canada put out the call. When the UN asked, Canadian soldiers were there. They did not hesitate to join the Korean War. In fact, Canada sent one of the highest numbers of soldiers, per capita, to Korea. Those men and women sacrificed themselves. They went to the front lines and were ready to give their lives for the values we cherish here in Canada. They were ready to defend the ideals of freedom and democracy that we enjoy here and want to see established in every country on earth.

I am happy that all the parties of the House made such a concerted effort to move this bill forward quickly. If everything goes smoothly and this passes through the legislative process quickly, we could be celebrating the first official day of remembrance to honour Canadian veterans of the Korean War this year, in 2013, the 60th anniversary of the Korean War armistice.

We have achieved this outcome today because all parties of the House were able to work together, thereby allowing us to honour people like my grandfather, people who truly gave their all in the service of Canada. It is a great privilege for me to have the chance to pay tribute to him today. I know that that time in his life had a tremendous impact on him.

Earlier I was talking about some of the bad memories he brought back with him. I am sure he had others that he never shared with his family, because soldiers sometimes experience horrible atrocities when taking part in armed conflict. We know this from our veterans returning from Afghanistan, for example. I had the opportunity to welcome some of them home to CFB Valcartier. Some of them were my age, and some even younger. Their experiences overseas will mark them for life. Some of them can no longer be members of the Canadian Forces because of what they went through while they were overseas. Nevertheless, we remember their sacrifice.

I welcome the initiative the House is taking through Bill S-213. Once again, I thank all of my colleagues in the House and those in the other place for their support. I hope this bill will pass quickly so that we can celebrate the first day of remembrance to honour Canadian veterans of the Korean War in 2013.

• (1115)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure that I rise today to speak to what is a very important bill. The member who spoke before me talked a lot about the support for Bill S-213. It goes a long way in recognizing what many Canadians have acknowledged for years, particularly our war vets, which is the important role Canadian soldiers played in Korea a number of decades ago. I believe that all members of the House of Commons support passage of this bill and want to see it passed as quickly as possible.

It is important for us to recognize July 27 as the signing of the armistice between South Korea and North Korea. Most people are not necessarily aware that in the neighbourhood of 26,000 members of the Canadian Forces participated in the Korean War, of which 516 lost their lives. Another 1,558 were wounded. This year, 2013, marks the 60th anniversary of the Korean armistice. The war began in 1950. Three years later, in 1953, it came to an end. Canadians continued to serve until roughly 1955 and some as late as 1957.

It was the first time the United Nations deployed members, and Canada was part of the United Nations. July 27 is the day designated a special day to acknowledge the signing of the armistice between South Korea and North Korea.

My colleague from Charlottetown raised the issue of the impact of that particular war. If we want a good indication of the roles the United Nations and Canada played, we should look at where South Korea is today. I will quote what he said, because he said it quite well:

The progress South Korea has experienced in the last 60 years is nothing short of remarkable. It is now the tenth largest economy in the world. The capital, Seoul, is a world-class, vibrant city of 11 million people, with high-rises and modern infrastructure. It has hosted the Olympics as well as the FIFA World Cup. It is a world leader in electronics and manufacturing. We have all heard of Hyundai and Samsung.

Private Members' Business

South Korea has done exceptionally well in all aspects of being a modern society. North Korea is strikingly different. That part of Korean society has not done nearly as well in terms of progress. We need to recognize that Canada and the United Nations played a significant role.

The Korean War began on June 25, 1950, when military forces from North Korea crossed into South Korea. For the first time in its early history, the United Nations became engaged, and forces were deployed under the UN flag.

• (1120)

Canadians, as I said, played a critical role during that war. We saw action in the battle of Kapyong and many others, beginning in April 1951. During that two-day battle, there were some 10 Canadians killed and 23 wounded. I know my colleague spoke at length, citing other battles that were fought where Canadians played a significant role.

I had the opportunity to serve in the forces. On Remembrance Day or in parades, quite often the highlight is put on World War I or World War II at military events. Many argued that we never gave enough attention to what took place in Korea. It is really only in the last couple of decades that there has been more attention given to Canada's role in Korea and the positive impact it had in that region of the world. In time, I suspect, we will see more recognition given to Korea.

Liberals see Bill S-213 as a step in the right direction in acknowledging those individuals who paid the supreme sacrifice and lost their lives while representing Canada and serving through the United Nations. As we move forward, I hope and anticipate that this bill will pass relatively quickly. I think there are many people watching who want this legislation to become law prior to the conclusion of this session for the simple reason that it would be wonderful to give that recognition on the 60th anniversary.

We in the Liberal Party recognize the importance of passing this legislation. We would like the legislation to pass prior to the conclusion of this session, whenever that might be, so that communities across Canada will be able to express their appreciation on July 27, marking the armistice agreement that was signed so many years ago.

• (1125)

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak in support of Bill S-213, An Act respecting a national day of remembrance to honour Canadian veterans of the Korean War. If this bill passes, July 27 will be designated Korean War veterans day.

Bill S-213 originated as a Senate private member's bill introduced by British Columbian senator Yonah Martin. The bill passed third reading in Senate in March and is now in the final stages of debate before the House of Commons. Canada's New Democrats support this bill and its intent to support veterans and their families.

For too long, the contributions of Canada's Korean War veterans have been overlooked. More than 26,000 Canadian servicemen and servicewomen served in the Korean War; 516 of them made the ultimate sacrifice in what has come to be known as "Canada's forgotten war". The role of Canadian troops in key battles, like

Kapyong and Hill 355, demonstrated the courage and distinction with which our soldiers served. After the war ended in 1953, about 7,000 Canadians remained in Korea to serve as military observers until the end of 1955.

Canadian soldiers were the recipients of numerous awards for valour, including nine distinguished service orders, thirty-three military crosses, five distinguished flying crosses, eight distinguished conduct medals and fifty-three military medals. In addition, the Second Battalion of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry was awarded the United States Presidential Unit Citation.

The Korean people have also expressed gratitude to our veterans for their service and sacrifice. In fact, when our veterans return to visit Korea, they are treated as honoured guests. Many veterans made the trip this year, including local constituent and decorated Korean War veteran Frank Smyth from Coquitlam who travelled to Korea to visit the war memorials and see how the country has developed over the past 60 years.

However, sadly, when soldiers returned home from Korea, their contributions were not recognized by their fellow Canadians in the same way as other veterans' contributions. It took 40 years before the Canadian government officially acknowledged the sacrifices made by our Korean War veterans who fought in a three-year-long war and watched too many of their fellow comrades die in battle. Veterans' groups like the Korea Veterans Association of Canada and the Royal Canadian Legion have been key drivers in the efforts to ensure that we do a proper job as a country of honouring the fallen soldiers of the Korean War as well as its thousands of veterans.

Thanks to their efforts, today Canadians can visit the Korea Veterans National Wall of Remembrance in Brampton, Ontario, where a plaque bears the names of Canadians who died in service. Canadians can also visit the Memorial Chamber in the Peace Tower here on Parliament Hill, where the Korean War Book of Remembrance contains the names of all 516 fallen soldiers.

I would like to recognize the efforts of Port Moody resident Guy Black who led a multi-year campaign for Canada Post to issue a commemorative stamp of the Korean War. He assembled hundreds of letters of support for the application. He enlisted my help in the campaign, and I lobbied the Minister of Veterans Affairs as well as the minister responsible for Canada Post, both of whom were supportive. Unfortunately, Canada Post rejected Mr. Black's applications. I commend Mr. Black for his many years of hard work and dedication to this cause.

Private Members' Business

As we now look to designate July 27 as Korean War veterans day, it is important to note that the duty to remember is not only for one day, but for every day of the year. The same, of course, can be said for Remembrance Day. In fact, there is far more we can do as a society to pay tribute to veterans. Respect for soldiers can be seen in the Canadian government's treatment of our veterans through benefits and services provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs. Much work remains to be done to ensure all veterans are given the honour and fair treatment they deserve. Assistance for veterans of more recent missions is particularly lacking.

Earlier this year, we heard the story of Colonel Neil Russell who, as a post-Korean War vet, was denied access to a veteran's bed in a long-term care facility. This policy is unacceptable and must change.

• (1130)

My mother-in-law Signe Radelet, who is 93 years young, is a veteran of the Second World War. She served three years in Kitsilano, Vancouver. She never received government support her entire life; now she does require support, such as a wheelchair and housing assistance. However, because she did not serve overseas, she is ineligible for government assistance from veterans affairs. Like so many other veterans, Signe served her country, asked little in return, raised her family, and now, near the end of her life, requires a little help. The government should be there to provide this help. It is the least it can do, given her contribution to Canada.

The treatment of Canada's Korean War vets should be a lesson in avoiding the practice of splitting up vets into different categories that receive different levels of recognition or benefits. The government should treat all veterans fairly, regardless of where or when they served. Some of these wrongs are slowly being corrected, like expanding the eligibility criteria for the Last Post Fund and returning unfairly deducted benefits to veterans, yet many are concerned that a quarter of a billion dollars in cuts to veterans affairs will hamper progress.

I hope the House will indulge me to take a moment to also recognize the important work of former MP and MLA Dawn Black, who drew much-needed attention to the problems of post-traumatic stress disorder and other psychological injuries among soldiers returning home from Afghanistan. Dawn was an excellent representative for her constituents, and her legacy is great. I want to thank Dawn for her many years of public service, and I wish her and Peter all the best as they begin to enjoy their retirement years together.

Bill S-213 proposes to create a Korean War veterans day. I would like to reiterate the official opposition's support for this timely initiative. The year 2013 marks the 60th anniversary of the end of the Korean War. It also marks 50 years of Canadian-Korean diplomatic relations, and Canada has designated 2013 as the Year of Korea.

Our countries' long-standing bilateral relationship is an important one based on co-operation in key areas like arts and culture, trade, democracy, human rights and tourism. Evidence of this can be seen in the constituency I represent of New Westminster—Coquitlam and Port Moody, which is home to a large, vibrant Korean-Canadian community.

I have also had the pleasure of being a member of the Canada Korea Inter-Parliamentary Friendship Group. This has afforded me an opportunity to play a small role in strengthening the friendship between our two countries.

I am pleased to support Bill S-213 at third reading and I look forward to its becoming law.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the efforts of the member for Sackville—Eastern Shore, the official opposition's veterans affairs critic, for his contributions to the early stages of this legislation and for his continued efforts on behalf of Canada's veterans.

• (1135)

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Wetaskiwin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank all my colleagues in the House today and at previous readings of this bill for their support. We had unanimous support for this bill at a standing vote on second reading.

I would like to thank my colleagues for their kind words. Sometimes people feel as though they might be all alone in having family affected by the Korean War. It was inspiring to hear that I am not the only member of this House with family members who served in the Korean conflict.

I would especially like to thank my good friend Senator Yonah Martin for spearheading this. She has been a stalwart supporter of our Korean War veterans. I have nothing but respect and admiration for her as she is doing what should have been done so long ago, which is rightly paying tribute to the Canadian Korean War veterans who fought so valiantly on behalf of the people of Korea.

I would like to thank the Korea Veterans Association of Canada, KVA Canada, for all they do in organizing all the events that are important in not only commemorating the Korean War and respecting our veterans but also in making sure our Korean veterans are well served.

I would also like to thank the Royal Canadian Legion, all branches, for their stalwart support of veterans in the broader scope, including, of course, our Korean War veterans. I could not be more proud of an organization in our country than the Royal Canadian Legion.

I would like to thank the men and women of our Canadian Armed Forces. They have my respect and the respect of all members of this country as they continue to do what those who fought before them have done so valiantly. They are always standing on guard for our country.

I would also like to thank the Government of South Korea for all that they do. I mentioned this in my speech. They have never forgotten the sacrifices that have been made. While we here in Canada might call this the "forgotten war", I can assure members that in Korea they have not forgotten the sacrifices made by United Nations countries, Canada being one of them. I thank them for all they do, including the bereavement program that brings bereaved family members or veterans back over.

Government Orders

I have one little quick story. When I was in Korea last November, I had the opportunity to go to the United Nations cemetery in Busan, but due to some flight issues I missed the actual ceremony. I was over there with some veterans who had described Korea as shanty towns and bombed roads, and today it is 12-lane highways with high-rise towers everywhere.

In the area of the UN cemetery in Busan, the buildings are quite low to the ground. It is an anomaly. People have to look at it and see that there are no high-rises. It is because the Government of Korea has decreed that no building can be built that will cast a shadow upon the grave of somebody who fought and died on behalf of the people of South Korea. That is just one example of the reverence the people of Korea have for our veterans.

I would like to thank our Minister of Veterans Affairs, the parliamentary secretary and all members of the committee for making this the Year of Korea in Canada and also the Year of the Korean War Veteran. I would like to thank all of our ex-pats.

In closing, we had the privilege of playing a hockey game on the Rideau Canal this year. A bunch of Canadian ex-pats, through a picture, saw that the various divisions of the Canadian Armed Forces in Korea played hockey on the Imjin River. They have reconstituted this Imjin River Cup. I would like to thank Andrew Monteith and all the Geckos over there.

Whether it is through playing hockey or through other types of events that we commemorate, all of these things remind us of our past and past sacrifices, but also the good things that have come from those sacrifices, such as the freedom to do something simple, like engaging in a hockey game, without fear of any type of repression or oppression. It is just one little way that we can commemorate the great deeds done by the 26,000 members of the Canadian Forces who served in the Korea War.

I hope we can pass this bill at third reading today and do what should have been done so long ago, which is to have a national day commemorating the tremendous sacrifices and the absolute heroics of the Canadians who served during the Korean War.

• (1140)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the third time and passed)

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The House will stand suspended until 12 o'clock.

(The sitting of the House was suspended at 11:40 a.m.)

SITTING RESUMED

(The House resumed at 12:00 noon)

• (1155)

VACANCY

BOURASSA

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): It is my duty to inform the House that a vacancy has occurred in the representation, namely Mr. Coderre, member for the electoral district of Bourassa, by resignation effective Sunday, June 2, 2013.

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

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

ECONOMIC ACTION PLAN 2013 ACT, NO. 1

BILL C-60—TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, 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 one further sitting day shall be allotted to the consideration at report stage of the Bill and one sitting day shall be allotted to the consideration at third reading stage of the said Bill; and

That, 15 minutes before the expiry of the time provided for Government Orders on the day allotted to the consideration at report stage and on the day allotted to the consideration at third 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 stage of the Bill then under consideration shall be put forthwith and successively without further debate or amendment.

• (1200)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Pursuant to Standing Order 67.1, there will now be a 30-minute question period. I invite hon. members who wish to ask questions to rise in their places at this point so I can get an assessment of how many members would like to participate.

Typically, questions and comments are about a minute long each. I think that today we can probably go a minute and a half. However, I would encourage all hon. members to pay attention to the Chair for a signal when the member's time is drawing to a close.

Questions and comments.

The hon. member for Parkdale—High Park.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today we have a record in this Parliament: 39 times this government has brought time allocation in to end debate, stifle debate, on parliamentary discussion of parliamentary bills.

Its previous own record stood at 31, which in itself is outrageous, but it has brought in time allocation now on 23 different bills since the election, for a total of 39 times.

Government Orders

The bill on which it is now bringing in time allocation is the budget implementation act, another omnibus budget bill, Bill C-60. In this bill, there are changes that would affect dozens of laws. Different parliamentary committees that should have had the opportunity to debate and question and pass some of this bill as separate individual bills have not had that chance.

This bill would affect the collective bargaining process in our crown corporations, would undermine the journalistic independence of the CBC and could undermine the independence of the Bank of Canada. We called for more study on this measure; the government shut that down.

This is a bill that would tinker with the temporary foreign workers program and the Investment Canada Act, which should themselves have separate debates, and it would raise taxes for Canadians across this country.

My question for the hon. minister is this: what is he and his government so afraid of that they have had to bring in time allocation 39 times?

Hon. Tony Clement: Mr. Speaker, in each of those cases there were very good reasons, mostly involving the fact that there had been quite considerable debate in this chamber or in various parliamentary committees before time allocation proceeded, which sets the rules for further debate in the House of Commons.

In this case, the budget bill has been a matter of discussion, both inside and outside the House, since March, almost 70 days ago. The bill has been before the finance committee, the industry committee, the veterans affairs committee, the human resources committee, the citizenship and immigration committee and the foreign affairs committee.

Many parliamentarians have participated in the debate, either in this chamber or in our House of Commons committees. That debate has been quite extensive and it is now time we have a motion to deal with further debate in the House and reach its logical conclusion.

• (1205)

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have heard from a number of witnesses, including Friends of Canadian Broadcasting, at committee. Also members of the finance committee received a letter from Hubert Lacroix, the president of CBC, who took what was almost an unprecedented step of writing to member and essentially threatening a court case if Bill C-60 passed without amendment. He said, “this legislation threatens the independence of the CBC and Radio Canada”. He said:

We believe that the proposed amendments to the Financial Administration Act... may conflict with key parts of the Broadcasting Act, our Corporation's governing legislation, and as a result, would reduce the independence that is critical to our operation.

He also said, “may give rise to conflicts with the Broadcasting Act and the Charter” and could ultimately lead to significant challenges in legal challenges with the corporation. He simply said that we could avoid all of this with an amendment that would protect the independence of the CBC.

Why is the government so hell-bent on driving this legislation through with closure? Why is the government not considering

constructive amendments to avoid this kind of conflict with the CBC and this threat to the independence of public broadcasting?

Hon. Tony Clement: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for further debate that had already occurred in the House of Commons committee on this item. There is no reason why there should not be further debate on it in this chamber as well.

However, the position of the government is that our bill does nothing of the sort in terms of journalistic integrity or independence when it comes to the journalism that is a portion of what the CBC does. Our concern, on behalf of the taxpayer, is that we have these crown corporations, not only the one the hon. member referenced, but dozens of others that go about their business in collective bargaining. At the end of the day, if their collective bargaining means massive changes in liability and in costs to that crown corporation, they turn to the bank of last resort, which is the Government of Canada.

Surely to goodness we should have some say in those collective bargaining arrangements, not in terms of journalistic integrity but in terms of the business affairs of these crown corporations, including, but not limited to the CBC, to ensure taxpayers are protected.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Before we continue, I want to remind all hon. members that in this question context we do not necessarily follow the normal rotation that the majority of the questions are given to opposition members as opposed to government members, but there can be government members as well.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Nanaimo—Cowichan.

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to hear the minister attempt to justify shutting down debate once again. As the member for Parkdale—High Park said, it has been 39 times that the government has limited the ability of parliamentarians to do their job. In this case, we have only had one hour of debate on the bill at this stage of its reading.

We are talking about a bill that is 115 pages long and amends 49 different pieces of legislation. When the bill had second reading, there was time allocation on that phase. Then it was referred to committees where people were unable to amend the bill. They had very limited time to call witnesses. In some cases, some committees only had one meeting on the legislation. Therefore, I hardly think we have had adequate time to give the bill the kind of study it requires. We saw this with the budget bill and now the budget implementation act.

As well, in this case, the government talks about how it needs to get this moving. Why did it not bring the bill forward earlier? The government controls the agenda for when a bill is called before the House for debate. It had ample opportunity to bring the bill forward so we would have the opportunity to study it in-depth and to call witnesses. Again, as the member for Parkdale—High Park pointed out, there are a number of different critical pieces of legislation that would be impacted by this, for example, the amalgamation of CIDA with foreign affairs and some changes to the way the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation would be able to operate.

Government Orders

Why does the minister think parliamentarians should not have the opportunity to provide due diligence for legislation that will have impact so many other pieces of legislation?

• (1210)

Hon. Tony Clement: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's commentary and question gives me the opportunity in my reply to remind her and the House that there were six parliamentary committees, including finance, that took portions of the bill, had hearings, heard from not only government officials but from business leaders as well. They heard from academics, industry groups, labour groups and many more. Those voices were heard. They were part of the deliberations of the committees, as it should be. Parliamentarians on those committees had an opportunity to familiarize themselves, in detail, with particular portions of the bill to ensure it did get the scrutiny it deserved. Then the bill came back for report stage to this chamber.

At this point, we are simply ensuring there is a framework for further debate on the bill. It is debate that is longer, quite frankly, than on previous budgets in the previous Liberal government. I note the 2001 Liberal budget, which was larger than today's bill, only had three days of debate. We propose to have more than that. Therefore, we are doing our due diligence as parliamentarians.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, every time there is time allocation on bills, the government breaks all records for that. The time for debate is shortened and that means limited time for members of Parliament, such as myself. I appreciate the hon. President of the Treasury Board said that there were opportunities. I tried to get to all the various committee hearings on Bill C-60, because it is such important legislation. As I am not a member of those committees, I am not allowed to ask questions.

However, the way in which witnesses are being treated in this current administration is an aberration compared to previous parliamentary procedures where in legislative committees witnesses would actually have sufficient time to put forward a 20-minute presentation and take lots of questions. We now have whole panels on many different topics. One panel can cover different topics. It gets five minutes and very little time for actual discussion and certainly no real deliberation, because everything is prescribed by partisan discipline.

In this context, right now on Bill C-60, I will have no opportunity to speak whatsoever. As you know, Mr. Speaker, and I am not protesting this point, none of my amendments or deletions or suggestions for Bill C-60 were chosen. I do not think there will be any speaking opportunity, yet I represent not just my party but my constituents, who have significant concerns.

We heard the member for Nanaimo—Cowichan speak about the changes to crown corporations, the changes to taxation of credit unions and the failure to define national security, one of the few opportunities we have had to put a definition of national security in the Investment Canada Act. None of these points will I be able to give more than the cursory 30 seconds here and there. Because with time allocation, I will have no speaking opportunity.

I would like to ask the hon. President of the Treasury Board if he would speak to his government whip and ask that I be given one of the speaking slots for Conservative members.

Hon. Tony Clement: Mr. Speaker, I will take that under advisement, but some things occurred at committee that were without precedent. It was a positive development that the hon. member was invited to the various committees. She was also invited to table amendments at finance committee and was able to speak at another committee.

As the hon. member knows, her numbers in the House do not technically warrant this. The rules are perhaps archaic, but they are the rules of this place. However, we were able, as a chamber, to come together to give her a greater opportunity.

Sometimes the opposition parties resisted this, I am told. I hope that is not over-reading the case, but it was very positive that the hon. member was given those opportunities. This is a greater opportunity than had been the case in the past.

I think that answers her question from the government side in terms of being fair and reasonable with respect to hearing representation on the bill.

• (1215)

Ms. Michelle Rempel (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are in debate about the content of the budget bill as far as its strength and scope. Perhaps my colleague could speak a bit to the functionality of a budget implementation bill as far as a requirement to change laws in order to implement the budget. Could he provide some clarity on that?

Second, given that we are debating time allocation, could he provide some clarity for Canadians as to why the passage of the bill is so important to the economic growth of our country?

Hon. Tony Clement: Mr. Speaker, this gets to the gist of what this is about. Procedure is important, certainly procedural fairness is important, but it is also about content. It is also about ensuring that we can move forward as a country and as a society for more jobs, more opportunity to ensure that security. When it comes to economic security, security of the taxpayer and security of our communities, it continues to be the *raison d'être* in this place for government activity, particularly surrounding the economic action plan 2013 and budgetary measures. The bill would do that

I will give a few examples. It would extend tax relief for new investments in machinery and equipment. I certainly heard in my round tables that this was important for Canadian manufacturing in particular, Canadian production more generally.

It would index gas tax fund payments to better support job creating infrastructure in municipalities. This is something municipalities had called upon governments to do for years. We are doing it in the bill.

Extending the mineral exploration tax credit is another example. I come from northern Ontario. This is critically important to the continued success of the economy in northern Ontario and other parts of our country.

Government Orders

Those are but a few examples of why the bill is important.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let me explain the normal stages of a bill as it makes its way through the House and the committees. First, the bill, the subject matter of which is often rather complicated, passes at second reading and is studied intensively during four or five meetings in committee. Then, it comes back to the House to be debated. All that for just one bill.

However, in the case of the budget implementation bill, Bill C-60, which amends, adds or eliminates about 50 laws, only two and a half meetings of the Standing Committee on Finance, of which I am a member, were devoted to the provisions of Bill C-60.

I would remind hon. members that this bill includes two rather complex parts on taxation and a third part on various amendments to a number of statutes. Indeed, 18 different parts might have needed 18 separate bills.

We were given just one day of debate at second reading and two and a half meetings at the Standing Committee on Finance. Some very superficial meetings were held at other committees, but there was never any real study in committee. The committee on investment held just one meeting with officials and that is all. We did not even get to propose amendments in the Standing Committee on Finance.

How can the President of the Treasury Board claim that we have had ample time to debate Bill C-60, when we really only took an extremely superficial look at it?

Hon. Tony Clement: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member talked about the process. As I have already said, content is also important.

More than six House committees had the opportunity to consider the different aspects of the bill. For example, the Standing Committee on Finance met more than five times to study this bill. The Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development and other committees of the House also met to study this bill. Therefore, there has been a great deal of discussion and debate.

Naturally, when it comes to the process, discussions and debate are necessary and important. However, at the end of the day, it is important to have discussion here, in the House, in order to arrive at a conclusion.

• (1220)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since there has been a Conservative majority government, we have seen a radically different attitude in terms of dealing with government business. Time allocation is now at a record high. Every time it introduces time allocation, it becomes a new record.

The majority Conservative government sees one way of passing legislation. It does not understand or appreciate the need to have democracy inside the House of Commons. Its attitude is that it is

going to be the government's way and it is going to force it through, no matter what the opposition members have to say.

The President of the Treasury Board makes a joke of the committee structure when he says that the bill has gone to six committees. I was at one of those committees. The Liberal Party was given 10 minutes to address it at the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration. This whole process is a joke in the way the majority Conservative government tries to manage its legislative agenda through the House of Commons.

When will the government realize that time allocation is being used a record number of times? No other government in the history of Canada has used time allocation in the manner the government has used it. When are we going to see a change in attitude that demonstrates more respect for the way the House proceeds and more respect for individual members of the House of Commons? When are we going to see a change in attitude by the government?

Hon. Tony Clement: Indeed, Mr. Speaker, I think I have outlined already this afternoon that our government approached this bill in a way that gave it further consideration by six separate committees of the House of Commons on various aspects of this bill. That shows that we are interested in getting feedback and in making sure that parliamentarians have an opportunity to have their say and input. That should be applauded, not held in derision, as the hon. member has done.

I find it passing strange that the hon. member, representing the party he does, says that. As I mentioned, in 2001, just to pick one example, the budget the previous Liberal government produced was longer than this budget and had 40% less debate in the House of Commons. It had bigger budgets than this one, with less debate. That was its record. For the hon. member to stand in this place and criticize us when we have gone out of our way to make sure that we have plowed new ground when it comes to discussion and debate on this particular budget does not have very much credibility.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that the President of the Treasury Board is answering our questions about the debate. One part of the bill deals with his authority to intervene in the negotiations of crown corporations. Given how easily the President of the Treasury Board confuses his own personal interest with the public interest, this hardly alleviates all our concerns.

I will reiterate what my colleague from Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques said. The consultations and the work done by the members of the Standing Committee on Finance—the only committee with the authority to really examine the bill—were just a facade, especially since most of the witnesses were clearly opposed to parts of the bill. Amendments were systematically rejected by the government. Everything was obviously decided beforehand. The government wants the bill to be passed in its present form. The NDP even proposed amendments that were not threatening in the least.

How can the President of the Treasury Board justify the fact that he is completely unreceptive to any suggestions?

Government Orders

Hon. Tony Clement: Mr. Speaker, there was a process to consider the amendments and the views of organizations such as trade unions and small businesses, for example. This process took place in committee, of course. That is precisely the place where these issues should be discussed. However, as I have previously said about crown corporations, the changes are intended to protect taxpayers, the public. We want a system that will enable crown corporations and unions to hold discussions. This is necessary to protect taxpayers' interests.

• (1225)

[*English*]

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to commend the minister for his answers. However, as I sit on the finance committee, it is hypocritical of the other parties to come here and present things that really are not factual. In committee, we heard from a number of witnesses, and the majority supported the measures in Bill C-60.

I also want to reply to some of the comments made by the NDP on how many pieces of legislation are in the bill. This is typical, and I would ask the minister to comment on how typical it is. The minister commented on the Liberals having a longer bill in 2001.

It is hypocritical when the NDP government in Manitoba recently, on May 31, was criticized for its omnibus budget bill, which actually introduces a controversial new subsidy for political parties. As members know, we are eliminating political subsidies. We think it is important that donations come to parties from taxpayers. However, the NDP government in Manitoba is going to provide new political aid through taxpayer funds in its omnibus budget bill. It is also going to reduce penalties for cabinet ministers in that omnibus bill. I do not agree with that. Let us hear from the minister about how typical it is to effect change with a number of legislations. What we will not do is hide things, as we see in Manitoba, in our omnibus bills.

Hon. Tony Clement: Mr. Speaker, I hesitate to get into the details, as the hon. member has, of Manitoba politics. I think she is the resident expert, and I will let her comments stand. However, I think the point she was making is valid.

We are talking about a budget bill here. Budget bills, by their very nature, indeed by their very definition, are going to change various aspects of various bills down the line. They are going to change the Income Tax Act. They are going to change, in this case, acts respecting crown corporations. They are going to change things that have to do with citizenship and immigration. In this case, we are giving more funds to veterans, so there are changes that have to do with Veterans Affairs.

It is perfectly natural and normal that a bill that pertains to the economy and the budgeting of the government will affect various other pieces of legislation down the line. That is typical. This is not atypical in any manner of speaking in that regard. This bill is important to the future of our economy to make sure we continue to find ways to produce more jobs, more opportunity, more economic growth and more economic certainty.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will start by saying how quickly they forget. There are a lot of members in the Conservative Party who came from a Reform Party background, when the slogan was “The west wants in”.

I have to say, as a western MP, that on a lot of these debates, I would like to get in. I would like to have my say in these debates. However, once again, on the bill before us, my opportunity to speak will be this one and half minutes to ask the minister questions.

What we see from the other side at this time is setting a very low bar. We have had a Conservative government for seven years, but it continues to refer back to what the Liberals did, which is becoming a bit of ancient history. In fact, Conservatives have their own record here, which is the repeated use in Parliament of time allocation.

We are talking about 49 bills being amended here. However, the minister is saying that we had 10 hours of debate in committee. I hesitate to do the math out loud and on the record, but it would seem that it would amount to about five bills per hour, or a bill every 12 minutes. With three parties, that would be about four minutes each. How can the minister say that we have had adequate consultation and discussion on these bills with that kind of record?

Hon. Tony Clement: Mr. Speaker, I am not here to tell the opposition how to conduct its affairs. I would just say that in my experience as a parliamentarian, which goes back to 1995, quality matters as much as quantity, in a lot of cases. The hon. member might want to talk to his research department or the various staffers who work for the NDP and work on that as we move forward in this parliamentary session.

The case was made. Various organizations from western Canada, central Canada and eastern Canada came forward saying that this bill is necessary. Probably municipalities in the hon. member's own constituency came before us and said that they need this bill to be passed and that it is important for their municipalities to attract new growth, jobs and opportunities by having the infrastructure in place. Business organizations, mostly small and medium enterprises, probably in the honourable member's own constituency, came before us and said that they need this bill passed.

The hon. member is incorrect when he says that we did not have that kind of say, that kind of debate and that kind of discussion. The jury is back in, and it is saying that this bill is necessary. That is what these groups and organizations representing millions of Canadians are saying.

• (1230)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): 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 Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Call in the members.

• (1310)

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

(Division No. 709)

YEAS

Members

Adams	Adler
Aglukkaq	Albas
Albrecht	Alexander
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambler	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson
Armstrong	Ashfield
Aspin	Baird
Bateman	Bergen
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	Del Mastro
Devolin	Dreeshen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Dykstra
Fantino	Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Flaherty	Fletcher
Galipeau	Gallant
Gill	Glover
Goguen	Goodyear
Gosal	Gourde
Grewal	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hayes
Hiebert	Hillyer
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	Leitch
Lemieux	Leung
Lizon	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunney
MacKenzie	Mayes
McColeman	McLeod
Menegakis	Menzies
Merrifield	Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Nicholson	
Norlock	Obhrai
O'Connor	Oliver
O'Neill Gordon	Opitz
O'Toole	Payne
Poilievre	Preston
Rajotte	Rathgeber
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Rickford
Ritz	Saxton
Schellenberger	Seeback
Shea	Shipley
Shory	Smith
Sopuck	Stanton
Storseth	Strahl
Sweet	Tilson
Toet	Toews

Trost
Truppe
Uppal
Van Kesteren
Vellacott
Warawa
Watson
Sky Country)
Wilks
Wong
Yelich
Young (Vancouver South)

Government Orders

Trottier
Tweed
Valcourt
Van Loan
Wallace
Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to

Williamson
Woodworth
Young (Oakville)
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NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Aubin
Ayala	Bélangier
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe
Borg	Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet	Brison
Brosseau	Byrne
Caron	Casey
Cash	Charlton
Chicoine	Chisholm
Choquette	Cleary
Côté	Crowder
Cuzner	Davies (Vancouver East)
Dewar	Dion
Dionne Labelle	Donnelly
Doré Lefebvre	Dubé
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Dusseau	Easter
Eyking	Foote
Freeman	Garneau
Garrison	Genest
Genest-Jourdain	Giguère
Godin	Goodale
Gravelle	Grogulé
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)
Hsu	Hughes
Jacob	Kellway
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Latendresse	Laverdière
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Leslie	Liu
MacAulay	Mai
Martin	Masse
Mathysen	May
McCallum	McGuinty
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	Michaud
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)	Mourani
Mulcair	Nantel
Nash	Nicholls
Nunez-Melo	Pacetti
Papillon	Péclet
Perreault	Pilon
Rae	Rafferty
Ravignat	Regan
Rousseau	Sandhu
Scarpaleggia	Scott
Sellah	Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	Sitsabaiesan
St-Denis	Sullivan
Toone	Tremblay
Turnel	Valeriote — 104

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to)

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

Government Orders

REPORT STAGE

The House resumed from May 31 consideration of Bill C-60, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 21, 2013 and other measures, as reported (without amendment) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Kings—Hants still has four and a half minutes left to conclude his remarks. I will give him the floor now.

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, before being so rudely interrupted by the weekend, I was saying that the Conservatives' latest budget would raise taxes by a whopping \$3.3 billion over four years, and a number of these tax measures are included in this budget implementation act.

Bill C-60 would attack Canada's rural economy, with tax increases on credit unions. It would take more money out of small communities that are already struggling, and it would make it harder for small businesses in rural and small-town Canada to get the credit they need to grow and create jobs.

This is what David Phillips, president and CEO of Credit Union Central of Canada had to say:

The income tax increase on credit unions...is growth limiting. It deprives credit unions of income that might otherwise be used to support the growth of the credit union by building its capital base. The credit union will...have less capacity to make loans to small business, fund community economic development, and meet member needs.

It disregards the federal government's desire to support small business in local communities...

...it's really a tax on growth.

It is a tax on growth in rural and small-town Canada.

Garth Manness, the CEO of Credit Union Central of Manitoba, said:

...it is no exaggeration to say that some...may begin to question the future viability of credit unions in many communities in rural Canada. Not only could people be left without access to a nearby financial institution, [but] valuable and stable jobs at the credit unions could be lost.

Many of Canada's smaller rural communities face persistently higher unemployment rates and a rapidly aging population as younger workers move to cities for stable jobs. It is illogical for the Conservatives to go ahead with this tax hike on credit unions and diminish an already-limited source of investment in these rural and small-town communities.

On top of hurting small businesses that rely on credit unions, Bill C-60 would attack 750,000 Canadian small-business owners with a new tax hike on dividends. This legislation would even raise taxes on safety depot boxes. Perhaps what is most offensive is that Bill C-60 would actually punish victims of crime by adding GST or HST to health care services they need to establish their case in court.

The Canadian Psychological Association remains concerned that Bill C-60 would add GST and HST to mental health services, including psychological assessments. This is what Karen Cohen, the CEO of the Canadian Psychological Association, said when she appeared before the finance committee: "If passed without clarification or amendment, Canadians will now have to pay taxes on certain psychological services that were once exempt". She

provided a number of examples of Canadian patients who would now have to pay GST on mental health services, and went on to say:

It's important to note that this isn't a pocketbook issue for psychologists. It's not the psychologists who have to pay this tax. It's going to be hard-working Canadians who have a health need that is not met by Canada's publicly funded health care system.

A psychological assessment can cost thousands of dollars in out-of-pocket fees. The amount of money at stake for Canadian patients is not trivial.

While it may be true that the Conservatives' latest omnibus budget bill is less omnibus than either Bill C-38 or Bill C-45, it is still deeply flawed, and we see the government now moving closure to ram this through the House of Commons without respect for Parliament and without proper scrutiny. This bill would threaten the independence of the CBC; it would raise taxes on hard-working Canadian families.

We proposed at committee some constructive amendments to address the very legitimate objections raised by Canadians during the committee's studies, but the Conservatives would not listen to reason. They have been deaf to the concerns of Canadians on this, and I expect Canadians will return the favour to the Conservatives in the next federal election.

•(1315)

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member rightly points out the fact that, first, this is a budget implementation bill that would amend 49 different pieces of legislation; and second, we just finished voting on time allocation, which will limit our ability to study the impacts of this particular piece of legislation.

The member noted a number of ways that Canadians would be impacted by this legislation. Could he comment on the fact that, once again, we are not going to have time to deal with the matters that are before this House in a way that would allow us to determine the impact and the longer-range consequences?

Hon. Scott Brison: Mr. Speaker, when we were studying some of the changes to the governance of labour negotiations for crown corporations that are made in this legislation, it was raised by several witnesses that they had been called in the past to appear before House of Commons committees but never the finance committee.

That was something we heard from a number of witnesses who noticed that instead of being called before the human resources committee to discuss issues around labour and governance around labour, which would have made sense, they were being called before the finance committee. Here we were at the House of Commons finance committee where we were supposed to be studying and focusing on fiscal questions, budget questions, and we were forced to be generalists and to opine on legislation that falls outside of the purview of either our expertise or the committee's mandate.

It is not enough to have some studies done at other committees, they should be able to vote on the individual provisions at those committees wherein the expertise lies.

Government Orders

• (1320)

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have remarked before that when the Conservatives lower a tariff, they claim it is a tax reduction. However, when they increase a tariff, they actually claim it is somehow protecting Canadian industry, not giving an advantage to other countries that export their products into Canada.

Could the member for Kings—Hants expound on that a bit, and let the members and Canadians know that they would be paying more for appliances, they would be paying more for bikes, they would be paying more for school supplies, because of an increase in tariffs to the tune of almost \$350 million in this budget?

Hon. Scott Brison: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Guelph for his continued hard work on behalf of Canadians in this House.

In the budget, the Conservatives say that cutting tariffs would help reduce cross-border shopping and help reduce the cost of living for Canadian families. The only problem is that they do not cut tariffs in this budget. In fact, they increase. The net increase is around \$250 million. The Conservatives cut some tariffs, about \$80 million, but they increased tariffs overall by \$250 million. That is the net, the difference between the \$330-million tariff increase and the \$80-million tariff decrease.

If we take into account the fact that the Conservatives would be increasing tariffs on middle-class Canadian families by \$250 million, using their own words and their own logic, this would increase cross-border shopping to the detriment of Canadian small businesses in border communities, and it would increase the cost of living for Canadian families.

The Conservatives are aware of the fact that they would be increasing tariffs and increasing taxes on just about everything the middle-class Canadian families need, but they are trying to hide it. They are trying to do it by stealth. They are being unaccountable.

By moving forward with time allocation today in the House, Conservatives are further reducing that accountability to Canadian families, Canadian citizens and Canadian taxpayers.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is certainly my pleasure and honour to stand and speak in favour of today's pro-economic and job-growth legislation, Bill C-60, economic action plan 2013 act, No. 1 at report stage. Certainly, like the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance last week, I also would like to thank the finance committee members and the great chair, the member for Edmonton—Leduc, for their comprehensive and timely study of the bill. I also would like to extend a very special thanks to every witness who appeared in front of the committee to speak to the significance of the bill and Canada's economy.

In my time today I would like to focus on a number of specific measures contained in the legislation that received some attention during our committee study. First, members will no doubt be familiar with the important adjustments to the Canadian tariff systems that were announced as part of economic action plan 2013. In spite of what the member for Kings—Hants indicated, I would really like to talk clearly about what this is intended to do.

This was in essence a foreign aid program and it was created in the 1970s by western countries to give companies from poor third world markets preferential access to our domestic market. Most western countries that maintained the GPT program or equivalent had modified their list of countries to reflect the fact that formerly developing countries had grown their economies in the 40 years since this program was first introduced, but unlike the EU, the United States and Japan, Canada has not reviewed the list of countries until now. This means that list is sorely outdated.

As a consequence, Canada is giving special breaks in the form of lower tariffs to foreign companies from emerging economic powerhouses like China, South Korea, India and Brazil, companies that compete directly with Canadian businesses and their workers for global market share. Nearly 80% of these special breaks are now going to China even though China now has an economy that is over four times the size of Canada's. Specifically, China's economy is valued at \$7.3 billion compared to Canada's, which is \$1.7 billion.

Without our changes, Chinese companies will continue to benefit from a one-way trade deal, receiving special breaks and offering nothing in return. This program acts as a disincentive for those growing economies to enter into free trade agreements with Canada, agreements that would increase export opportunities for Canadian businesses, would create more and better jobs for Canadians and would further reduce tariffs for Canadian consumers.

The Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters explained the changes best when it said:

It's 39 years since we updated it. It was meant to help developing countries...we were giving them preferential tariffs while their per capita GDP is higher than Canada's...The solution is what the government is doing: try to negotiate free trade agreements with countries around the world so that we not only drop our tariffs, but they drop their tariffs as well.

That is exactly what we are trying to accomplish.

This leads me to another important feature of today's legislation that responds to recent concerns of the U.S.-Canada price gap. Economic action plan 2013 proposes to eliminate all tariffs on baby clothing and select sports and athletic equipment, including everything from ice skates, hockey equipment, skis, snowboards, golf clubs and other products that promote physical fitness and healthy living.

Targeted measures contained in Bill C-60 represent \$79 million in annual tariff relief for Canadian families. I should note though, this tariff relief comes with the expectation that wholesalers, distributors and retailers will pass these savings on to consumers. Working with the Retail Council of Canada and consumer groups, our government will be monitoring the impact of these tariff reductions on Canada's retail prices.

Government Orders

●(1325)

In fact, the Retail Council of Canada has spoken out in support of this important first step in reducing outdated tariffs, which put Canadian consumers at a disadvantage, stating:

—we are very pleased to see this first step toward leveling the playing field for Canadian retailers...it is a good start and a demonstration of the government's recognition of one of the key reasons for price differences in Canada.

Even better, listen to what Dean Lapierre, president of the Windsor Minor Hockey Association, had to say:

This will definitely help because the cost of equipment is the main thing people cite when deciding to register... It could cost \$600 to \$700 to equip one player, double that if the kid's a goalie. And a lot of families have two or more kids who want to play, so this is great.

I want to be clear that this initiative would allow our government and all Canadians to assess whether further tariff elimination could help to narrow the price gap for consumers in Canada. Of course, this is going to guide our future decisions.

Before concluding, I want to take a moment to highlight one particular item contained in today's legislation related to public sector compensation, specifically the amendments to the Financial Administration Act that would enable the Governor in Council to direct a crown corporation to have its negotiating mandate, including wages and benefits, approved by Treasury Board. While this may seem highly technical to many Canadians watching at home, it really is very important for taxpayers across the country.

As with our action in last year's budget to reform public service pensions, along with those of MPs and senators, to make them more sustainable and bring them in line with private sector pensions, the overriding objective is to protect the taxpayer's dollar. While we acknowledge that all crown corporations are independent in their operations, their financial decisions impact the government's bottom line.

As responsible economic managers, our government must ensure that we have the right tools to protect taxpayers at the bargaining table, if necessary. This is neither new nor revolutionary. It is a common sense action on behalf of taxpayers. It is important to note on this particular measure that Quebec has had a very similar provision in place for over three decades. I hope that all members of the House will understand that both the government and crown corporations have a fundamental responsibility to spend taxpayers' dollars wisely and to help ensure that Canada's fiscal position remains sustainable over the long term.

In the words of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation:

—[the] executives who manage government-owned companies have enjoyed, until now, special status: they are paid like business people, with none of the risk... But the taxpayer is always there, at the end of the day, to stroke another cheque, cover the losses, and make everything better...

Simply put, provisions in Bill C-60,... grant [the government]...the power to tell negotiators at these companies how much they can offer unions in wages, benefits... to insert some spine into government negotiating teams—should improve the odds for taxpayers.

Again, I would like to note that the legislation before us today is an important step in creating jobs and economic growth, while keeping taxes low and balancing the budget by 2015. I certainly urge all members to vote in favour of this jobs, growth and long-term prosperity budget bill and support this very important measure.

●(1330)

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one aspect that seems to be missing from this bill is any big discussion about an energy strategy for this country. We hear time and time again how the oil sands and other oil and gas activities are the economic engine of this country, yet budget bill after budget bill tabled in the House is vacuous as to how we are going to better regulate our energy industry.

Through the last three budget bills, the government streamlined environmental legislation. Many in my province, including the premier, have called for the federal, provincial and territorial governments to work together on a clean energy strategy for all Canadians. Could the member speak to why we continue to see nothing about this in any of the government's budget bills that come forward?

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out a bit of irony. Opposition members frequently say there is too much in the bill and that there should be discussions at the environment committee and with natural resources. I would say to the member that those are appropriate discussions for committees designed to deal with that. We have made some important improvements in the environmental legislation in previous budgets in order to provide balance.

Today, we are talking about Bill C-60, the budget implementation act, and very important measures, whether it is the Nature Conservancy of Canada, which is incredibly well received, the Pacific salmon stamps, the money that is going to go directly to the organization to support the conservation of habitat. We are here to speak to Bill C-60, but I certainly believe we are having dialogues at many different levels on the important issue of energy.

Mr. Jeff Watson (Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-60 is an important tool to get our budget implemented to address, among many things, a skills mismatch in our country and getting people into open jobs. I know that is a big problem out west, particularly, as it is in Essex County, in the machine, tool, die and mould sector, which has plenty of openings.

I wonder if the member could comment on the importance of the new Canada job grant as a tool for overcoming or bridging that skills mismatch to get people who are either unemployed or under-employed into those meaningful positions in order to keep the economy moving.

Government Orders

•(1335)

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Speaker, one of the pieces in the budget that was very well received and that people are excited about is the Canada job grant. Of course, that is going to take the federal government and the provincial governments, but most importantly, the employers. We are going to try to create the right skills match for the jobs that are available in the future. This is going to be a win, win, win, win: a win for the federal government, a win for the provincial governments, a win for the employers, and of course, a win for the potential employees.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary and I are both members of the Standing Committee on Finance.

Clearly, for a bill of this scope and importance, there was very little consultation and debate in the Standing Committee on Finance.

Other than the meeting we had with Department of Finance officials and, of course, the clause-by-clause meeting, we had the equivalent of two and a half meetings in committee to discuss a bill that will add, eliminate or amend 50 or so pieces of legislation.

Clearly this was not enough time to do a thorough study. Moreover, the superficial study carried out in other committees did not meet the need for careful consideration of this bill.

However, the independence of crown corporations, in particular the Bank of Canada, was raised in committee in relation to the proposed amendments in division 17.

I would like the parliamentary secretary to comment on this. We wanted to have a special meeting to consider the question of the independence of the Bank of Canada and its impact, but the Conservatives refused.

I would like her to explain to the House why the Conservatives refused to study this specific issue of the independence of the Bank of Canada.

[*English*]

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Speaker, what we have is a very important measure that is in no way going to challenge the independent ability of crown corporations to do what they are supposed to be doing. For example, CBC has protection under the Broadcasting Act.

What we are simply saying is that there are things like the agreement with the postal workers, whereby if a post office closes down and there is no work within 40 kilometres, we maintain a responsibility to continue to pay these workers. Most Canadians would agree that this kind of negotiation does not make sense. We need some flexibility. Ultimately, we are responsible for the taxpayers' dollars.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be speaking to Bill C-60 today. I know that many of my colleagues would have liked to have the time to speak today because the bill is quite complex. It is important that our voices be heard here in the House so that we can discuss the bill and have a healthy debate.

I want to begin my speech with a personal comment that I think is appropriate here. With this budget, the government is forcing Canadians to tighten their belts. It is asking workers, parents, youth, the unemployed, seasonal workers, seniors, middle-class families and so on to get with the program and accept a budget that is clearly not in their interest and will require an even greater effort on their part to make ends meet. I find that appalling.

There are a number of scandals, not just one, currently plaguing the government. While Canadians work to pay their taxes, senators are spending wildly and claiming ineligible expenses. Unelected senators have no respect for Canadians. While senators are banking an extremely generous salary, taxpayers are paying for their antics. As if that were not enough, the government has lost track of \$3.1 billion. Honestly, how it is possible to lose \$3.1 billion? I simply cannot get over it. It is incomprehensible.

A number of my constituents telephoned me personally, in a panic, when that hit the news. They are asking me to do something, to take action. My opposition colleagues and I are doing everything we can to get some clarification, and we want answers. Canadians deserve answers.

The government should be ashamed of this budget. We are obviously going to vote against it. The budget should contain measures that make life more affordable and create jobs for Canadians. Instead, the government is raising taxes on a number of consumer items, such as hospital parking, safety deposit boxes, labour-sponsored investment funds, bicycles and baby strollers. These tax hikes will cost Canadians nearly \$8 billion. That is far too much. People have had enough.

One important point caught my attention: the elimination of the tax credit for labour-sponsored funds. This decision will affect the middle class and its ability to save for retirement. It will deprive Quebec SMEs of significant support for their development. Instead of creating jobs and supporting local initiatives, the Conservatives are going after the unemployed, families, seasonal workers and especially our regions.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer analyzed the economic situation and the government's bills. She found that budget 2012, the 2012 update and budget 2013 will result in the loss of 60,000 jobs by 2017 and will cause a 0.58% decline in the GDP. Needless to say, this will have an impact on our country's economic growth.

I would like to talk about transparency and control of the CBC. The Conservatives are trying, for the third time since the beginning of their mandate, to circumvent parliamentary and public oversight by trying to sneak this budget through. This week, they went even further by imposing a gag order to shut down debate. This is the 39th or 40th gag order we have seen in the House. Parliament should be a place where elected officials can show respect for their constituents and have a good discussion, a good debate. What are the Conservatives afraid of? Transparency is definitely not part of the government's values.

Government Orders

Another change this bill makes would enable the government to compel a crown corporation to have its negotiating mandate approved by the Treasury Board so that it can reach a collective agreement with a union, particularly in the case of the CBC. Canadians do not want to see the government exercise that kind of control over our national public broadcaster. Freedom of speech is a fundamental right, and the CBC must be able to retain its independence.

● (1340)

On this topic, my colleague, the NDP heritage critic and member for Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, had this to say:

The federal government already appoints CBC's directors and determines its annual budget. That's already a lot of control over a public broadcaster that must remain independent in its role as watchdog of democracy...Bill C-60 is another attempt by the Conservatives to interfere in CBC's affairs and we cannot let it pass.

The government is flying in the face of common sense and ignoring protests by moving forward with these misguided measures. Cuts to environmental research are another weakness of the budget. Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, AAFC, is one of the departments that is most affected by the budget cuts. Close to 700 workers just recently found out that they will lose their jobs and that a number of research centres will close.

At the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, several witnesses told me that research and development are key to the future of agriculture in Canada. When the government eliminates funding for public research, it lets the private sector—often big, multinational companies—do its own research. That is alarming.

AAFC will eliminate 350 jobs: 144 commerce officers, 79 scientists, 76 information technology officers, 29 engineers, 14 biologists, 5 research directors and 3 procurement officers.

This also makes me think of the decision that will affect the Montreal Biosphere, the only environmental museum in North America. This is another one of the Conservative government's attacks on science education. When most of the staff was laid off, this institution lost scientific and environmental expertise. Through this decision, the Conservatives are failing to live up to a 25-year agreement between the Government of Canada and the City of Montreal.

Making a budget is all about making choices. I, personally, decided to keep the same car I had before the election and pay off my student loans. I make responsible choices. Presenting a budget is a choice. It is not easy. I understand that it is complicated. However, in this budget implementation bill, the Conservatives are failing families, workers, the environment, job creation and science. At the end of the day, Canadians are the ones who are going to have to pay the price.

I hope the government will realize how inconsistent it is being. It is asking people to tighten their belts at a time when it is involved in scandals, such as the ones in the Senate. Making cuts in areas as important as science and the environment does not make sense, especially when we know that this government lost track of \$3.1 billion. Instead of putting research into the hands of industry, the government should be investing in research and making more of an effort to find the missing \$3.1 billion.

Nevertheless, I am sure that the NDP will be able to turn things around. Canadians need to feel like they can trust the people they vote for. They need to be able to identify with the people that they vote for and that is where we come in. We are voting against this bill.

I am ready for questions and comments.

● (1345)

[*English*]

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for that very thorough speech. One point she touched upon in her speech was the issue of the CBC, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. In my riding, Nanaimo—Cowichan, on Vancouver Island, the CBC is much loved. I have received hundreds of emails expressing concern about what Bill C-60 proposes to do with regard to the CBC. In fact, a number of people have raised concerns about having far too much government control over the CBC in terms of its collective bargaining and in terms of perhaps interfering in journalistic freedom.

The NDP proposed an amendment to the bill that would have seen us hive off the aspect dealing with the CBC as a separate piece of legislation, which would then have enabled us to debate it fully and study it fully at committee.

I wonder if the member would comment specifically about the government's intent to limit debate and to limit scrutiny of these key pieces of legislation that would be impacted by Bill C-60.

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau: Mr. Speaker, I am not on the finance committee, but I know that we did have 33 amendments. I think the Liberals put up eight at one point.

It is very important to have a full debate, but every day now we see time allocation. When we are being shut down in the House, we do not have a full debate, and we are still feeling the effects of what we saw last year.

I said in my speech that Canadians will pay the price of these decisions. We have to do better for future generations. We have a responsibility, and I do not think we are doing enough. It is very sad to see what is going on right now in Parliament. Canadians deserve better.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoulu, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Berthier—Maskinongé for her speech.

I have the privilege of being a member of the Standing Committee on Finance. We proposed 33 amendments. The NDP often moved very reasonable amendments. We wanted to make sure that the parts of the bill we agreed with were amended so that they could be properly enforced.

It is absolutely unbelievable that the government representatives had already decided what they were going to do. They systematically rejected all of the amendments proposed.

How would my colleague explain the government's actions?

Government Orders

The Prime Minister has been calling on the opposition to collaborate and make suggestions for years. However, we keep hitting a wall. I thank the member in advance for her comments.

• (1350)

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question and for his work on the Standing Committee on Finance. I congratulate all of my colleagues because we work hard.

I am not talking just about the members of Parliament, but also about our research team and all of the assistants who help us every single day with our work. We truly do work hard and take our jobs seriously.

It is very sad and disappointing to see that the Conservatives will not accept any of our amendments. We work very hard, but when we show up in committee to move our amendments, they have already decided, as my colleague indicated, that they will not accept anything. They have decided that their bill is perfect as is.

I have a hard time understanding why they refuse to accept anything. There were witnesses who supported our values and many of our amendments. I have several testimonies, but I do not have the time to read them all. It is very sad.

[*English*]

Mr. Devinder Shory (Calgary Northeast, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government continues to focus on what matters to Canadians: jobs, economic growth and long-term prosperity. In my riding of Calgary Northeast, I have heard time and again that one of the most important issues is jobs. I stand today to help outline how our Conservative government's economic action plan 2013 would help connect settled Canadians as well as new Canadians with available jobs.

The hardest-working riding in the country, Calgary Northeast, is a very diverse place indeed, with 45.6% of my constituents being first-generation Canadians and 43% of the population being immigrants. We have one of the highest numbers of immigrants in Alberta, if not the highest.

Economic action plan 2013 also promises to reopen the federal skilled worker program and update the points system over the coming years. It would give more weight to factors that are directly related to economic success. This would help ensure new immigrants, such as those in my riding, are well suited and prepared for the jobs in their adopted home of Canada.

We are also introducing the new start-up visa, which is the first of its kind in the world. This visa will help attract innovative immigrant entrepreneurs to launch their companies in Canada to help create new jobs and spur economic growth.

New Canadians come here wanting to work and contribute to this great country. The start-up visa, as well as the "expression of interest" immigration management system, will help them realize these goals and become productive, proud members of our society.

The "expression of interest" immigration management system would allow Canadian employers, provinces and territories to select skilled immigrants from a pool of applicants who best meet Canada's economic needs. This will help to ensure that new Canadians go where the jobs are. It would also help to promote integration since it

is much easier to integrate into our Canadian society when people are educated and able to work in their field, to contribute and have a sense of accomplishment.

Let me say that the hard-working riding of Calgary Northeast will be welcoming these enterprising new Canadians with open arms. Voting against jobs, growth and long-term prosperity not only for Canadians but for future Canadian citizens is not a good idea. I hope the NDP and Liberals will join with me in supporting budget 2013 instead.

In my riding of Calgary Northeast, 12.6% of my constituents have post-secondary credentials from outside of Canada, many of which are not currently recognized here. This inhibits the ability of these new Canadians to find gainful employment.

Economic action plan 2013 recognizes that this is a very real problem not only in my riding but from coast to coast to coast. Over the next two years, our government will work with provinces, territories and stakeholders to support improvements to the foreign credential recognition process and address the demand for skilled workers in Canada in additional occupations.

This will help individuals who were educated and trained abroad to find employment in their fields when they come to Canada. It will also help support employers by supplying them with qualified workers in occupations facing labour shortages.

One sector that faces a major labour deficit is apprenticeship and skilled labour jobs. I have the pleasure of sitting on the human resources and skills development committee, which recently undertook a study on how to encourage apprenticeship programs in Canada. We heard time and time again from witnesses that there is a high demand for apprentices, a group our government has a proud history of supporting.

Our government recognizes the important contributions to the Canadian economy that the skilled trades make. It was our Conservative government that introduced the apprenticeship incentive grant, which provides up to \$2,000 in financial assistance for apprenticeship training in a Red Seal trade. There is also the apprenticeship completion grant of \$2,000 for registered apprentices who successfully complete their apprenticeship program and receive journeyperson certification in a designated Red Seal trade. These programs have proven to be a huge success, with a projected expenditure for 2013-14 of \$114.6 million.

Our Conservative government is continuing to support apprentices in this budget by introducing measures that would support the use of apprentices through federal construction and maintenance contracts, investments in affordable housing and infrastructure projects receiving federal funding.

The committee heard from witnesses that there are labour shortages that should be filled by young apprentices, and our government is helping to ensure that young apprentices are given those opportunities. By working on government projects, they will gain invaluable experience on their way to becoming skilled tradespeople.

Statements by Members

Key stakeholders representing Canadians of all walks of life endorse measures like this in economic action plan 2013.

● (1355)

This very measure was endorsed by average Canadians like James St. John of the Hammer Heads Program, who told the committee on February 7, 2013:

We want to see the government tie infrastructure dollars to apprenticeship opportunities for the youth of our communities. In doing that, there is no cost to the government whatsoever. The cost is really zero to the employers, who are going to need workers to build the renovations or the new buildings that you're constructing through infrastructure dollars.

The passing of this budget in a quick and timely manner is of the utmost importance.

There is another important measure I have to mention. First, though, I will mention a constituent, Tom Pollon, who worked at a company for 25 years before it went bankrupt and he had to be laid off. He told my office how the targeted initiative for older workers will help him in his job search.

The targeted initiative for older workers focuses on older workers aged 55 to 64 who are unemployed and require new or enhanced skills to successfully transition into employment. It is aimed at helping people like Mr. Pollon, who may face difficulties due to age in finding gainful employment. Since 2007, this program has provided employment assistance services to over 28,000 unemployed older workers.

Let me share with my colleagues what Mr. Pollon told me: "In fact, I believe it would do much to negate the age concern of prospective employers if I could say I qualify for TIOW in resume and use it in my job search."

In economic action plan 2011, our Conservative government promised \$50 million for the targeted initiative for older workers over two years and extended the program until 2013-14.

Economic action plan 2013 is about connecting Canadians with available jobs, be they apprentices, elderly workers, or new Canadians.

I call upon the opposition to support this budget and for once stand on the side of jobs, the economy and common sense.

Canadians have told us what they need. We listened. We are here to help. I wish the opposition would do the same.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The time for government orders has expired. The five minutes for questions and comments for the member will take place when this matter returns before the House.

Statements by members. The hon. member for Kildonan—St. Paul.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

THE SENATE

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I share the disappointment of Canadians over the abuse of taxpayer money by some members of the Senate. There is no excuse for any politician of any political party to take advantage of public finances or public trust. I support a full investigation by independent authorities into this matter.

It is also imperative that every cent of every dollar spent by anyone who holds public office, whether in the House of Commons, Senate or otherwise, must respect taxpayer money. Integrity and accountability are absolutely vital to the institution of Parliament.

We made a promise to Canadians to fix Senate expense rules. We have done just that. The Senate now has adopted our government's 11 tough new rules governing Senate travel and expenses.

Our government is focused on delivering meaningful reform to the Senate, including Senate elections, Senate term limits and tough spending oversight. Canadians understand that our Senate, as it stands today, must be accountable.

* * *

● (1400)

HUMBER RIVER

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last year the Conservative government removed most of Canada's rivers and lakes from the Navigable Waters Protection Act. Out of our hundreds of thousands of rivers and lakes, only 62 rivers and 97 lakes remain protected. What a travesty.

Bordering my electoral district of Parkdale—High Park in the city of Toronto is the Humber River, one of Canada's great heritage rivers, which is part of the historic Toronto Carrying Place trail used by aboriginal populations dating back over a thousand years.

The Humber River is the only Canadian heritage river accessible by subway, in the middle of our largest city, yet people can kayak and canoe on it, and in the spring when the steelhead run it is a wildly popular fishing spot.

Last week I seconded Bill C-502, presented by my colleague from York South—Weston, which aims to re-establish protection for the Humber River.

In recognition of June 9, Canadian Rivers Day, I will join with my community to protect the Humber River for today and for future generations.

* * *

BRITISH COLUMBIA GENERAL ELECTION

Mr. Dan Albas (Okanagan—Coquihalla, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a general election was held recently in British Columbia that introduced many new faces to the legislative assembly of British Columbia and a record amount of female MLAs will be heading to Victoria.

Statements by Members

In my area, I would like to congratulate first-time MLAs Linda Larson in Boundary-Similkameen and Jackie Tegart in Fraser—Nicola, along with Penticton Mayor Dan Ashton being elected to the provincial level for the first time and Ben Stewart also being successfully re-elected in Westside-Kelowna.

I would also like to take a moment to sincerely thank former Fraser—Nicola Valley NDP MLA Harry Lali for 18 years of service to his community and retiring Penticton MLA and Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia, Bill Barisoff, for 17 years of service to the South Okanagan.

I greatly enjoyed working with both Harry Lali and Bill Barisoff and would like to wish both gentlemen well in their future endeavours.

I look forward to working with our new and re-elected MLAs in the years ahead.

* * *

IRA LEWIS

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Ira Lewis, who recently passed away.

Ira, from York, P.E.I., served his community and fellow Canadians in many capacities, but first and foremost he was a family man, proud of his heritage and so satisfied to see the family farm continue.

His son described his principles as his God-given love, respect and responsibility. Through a number of organizations, including the PEI Federation of Agriculture and the P.E.I. Fluid Milk Association, Ira worked to benefit the total farm community. He was known for being at the cutting edge of agriculture technology.

With his brother Claude, they were recognized internationally as a breeder of purebred Holsteins and won awards in Charlottetown, the Atlantic Winter Fair and The Royal, carrying such honours as premier exhibitor.

In 1984, Ira was inducted into the Atlantic Agricultural Hall of Fame.

On behalf of the House, I recognize and thank Ira Lewis for his dedication and contribution to his community and the agriculture sector as a whole.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Devinder Shory (Calgary Northeast, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our Conservative government is focused on what matters to Canadians, that being jobs, growth and long-term prosperity.

Through Canada's economic action plan, we are taking measures that would help businesses in my riding of Calgary Northeast. These include expanding the hiring tax credit for small business that would help businesses such as Best Buy Furniture owned by Karampal Sidhu, RED 106.7 FM owned by Kulwinder Sanghera and State Farm Insurance Agency owned by Romi Sidhu.

The Canada job grant would provide federal funding to train Canadians at businesses like Fast Track Auto Service owned by

Deepak Cheema and Herman Bath, AAA Windows owned by Rana Sandhu and Klair Custom Homes owned by Avtar Klair.

I urge the opposition to support economic action plan 2013 and stop opposing our government's efforts to help Canadian businesses get the skilled workers they desperately need and provide Canadians the good paying jobs they deserve.

* * *

TURKEY

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on Friday, as demolition crews prepared to destroy one of the last green spaces at the heart of Istanbul's Taksim Square, Gezi Park, a nation awoke in peaceful protest to demonstrate for better living conditions for all Turks.

In light of the developments since Friday, we call on all sides to exercise restraint and ensure respect for a peaceful protest. Non-violent expression and assembly, including peaceful protests, are essential democratic freedoms. The free exchange of information and opinion among citizens, both directly and through the media, is an integral element of democratic expression.

We are deeply concerned by the escalation of the situation and the emergence of violence. We urge all sides to ensure that their actions respect the highest democratic principles and the republic's commitment to human rights.

[Member spoke in Turkish and provided the following translation:]

Hey Turks, don't forget Atatürk's words: "We are Turkish, we were born a democratic people".

* * *

● (1405)

DIABETES

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in a few weeks, I will speak to my private member's motion, regarding the relationship between obesity and the long-term health of Canadians. As a Canadian with type 2 diabetes, I am an example of what can happen to a family member, a friend or even you, Mr. Speaker, if personal health is taken for granted.

Poor eating habits, weight gain and a lack of exercise has led to my condition. I was lucky to be diagnosed early in the progression of this disease. It has allowed me to control my diabetes through diet and exercise.

Recently, I had the honour to run the Blue Nose Marathon in Halifax on behalf of Team Diabetes. While I am not recommending that everyone run a marathon, the message is clear: We all have a responsibility to eat properly and exercise.

We need to continue to support and promote organizations like the Canadian Diabetes Association and Participaction, which are all involved with the well-being of all Canadians of all ages. While it is vital to our health care system, more important, we owe it to our families, our friends and to ourselves.

*Statements by Members***AL PETTIT**

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, June is ALS month in Canada. In November, it was my distinct privilege to posthumously present the Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Medal to retired fire captain Al Pettit, who lived in my riding of Dufferin—Caledon .

Al succumbed to amyotrophic lateral sclerosis after a long fight with this deadly disease, a disease that also claimed my own father. It affects approximately 3,000 Canadians.

Al never quit fighting, whether serving as an ambassador for an ALS online forum or participating in ALS fundraising in Orangeville and Brampton. In death, Al donated his spinal cord and a portion of his brain to assist researchers. The Diamond Jubilee Medal for Al was accepted by his wife, Lee.

Al was recently recognized by the ALS Society of Canada with its lifetime achievement award for his tireless efforts on behalf of those who suffer with ALS.

I encourage all members to wear a cornflower today to show their support for the fight against ALS. Together, we will find a cure.

* * *

CHRIS SNOWBALL, DUSTIN DAGENAIS, JACQUES DUPUY, DON FILLITER

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express the grief and shock of the people of northern Ontario over the loss of four young men in Thursday's medevac crash outside of Moosonee.

The crew was responding to a medical call in Attawapiskat, but they never made it. Just after midnight, the Sikorsky helicopter went down in the dense bush of the James Bay coast.

The people of Moosonee, Moose Factory and all our communities are in mourning. Our brave medevac crews are a lifeline for the northern communities and they often fly in difficult conditions, ensuring health care and emergency services. In this tragedy, we lost paramedic Chris Snowball, a father of three, Dustin Dagenais of Moose Factory, who left a wife and seven month old daughter, pilot Jacques Dupuy and captain Don Filliter.

On behalf of the New Democratic Party and all parliamentarians, I want to pay tribute to these men and offer our condolences to their families, loved ones and colleagues. We will remember them.

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CANADIAN ARMED FORCES DAY

Mr. Corneliu Chisu (Pickering—Scarborough East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise on Canadian Armed Forces Day in the House of Commons and pay tribute to the men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces for the incredible work they do on behalf of our country.

Each and every day, our Canadian Armed Forces members put duty first and carry out their responsibilities with professionalism and bravery. They protect our sovereignty, assist Canadians in distress and are involved in 16 overseas missions, helping to bring peace, security and stability around the world.

We are proud that in many countries they are the face of Canada. I know all members in the House will join me in saluting the members of the Canadian Armed Forces, past and present, for their service and sacrifice: Bravo Zulu.

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THE SENATE

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, British Columbians are fed up with the unelected, unaccountable Senate.

This archaic institution costs Canadians over \$92 million a year. Appointed senators, especially those who abuse their privileges, do not represent Canadians' interests or values.

The Conservatives promised to reform the Senate, but seven years and 59 Senate appointments later, it is safe to say they have broken their promise. Now the Prime Minister and his office are embroiled in the Senate expense scandal and are refusing to answer even straightforward questions.

The Liberal Party believes the Senate is fine as is. The Liberal leader even suggests Quebec should be glad B.C. is under-represented in the Senate.

For too long, the Senate has been treated as a posh retirement home for partisan hacks, bagmen and failed candidates. Canada's New Democrats believe it is time the government abolished the unelected, unaccountable Senate once and for all.

* * *

● (1410)

LEADER OF THE LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. John Carmichael (Don Valley West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is bringing forth meaningful reform to the Senate.

Just last week, 11 tough new changes introduced by our Conservative senators were adopted in order to govern travel and expenses.

It is, however, unfortunate that while our government is focused on delivering meaningful reform to the Senate, the leader of the Liberal Party has come out as the champion of the status quo, saying "We have 24 Senators in Quebec and there are only 6 for Alberta and British Columbia. That benefits us. To want to abolish it, that's just demagoguery".

These shameful divisive comments simply prove that the leader of the Liberal Party is determined to pit one region of Canada against the other.

When will the leader of the Liberal Party stop defending the status quo and join our government in delivering meaningful reform to the Senate? It is clear that the leader of the Liberal Party is in over his head.

LATIN WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS EXPO

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on May 25, I had the great pleasure of visiting the first Latin Women Entrepreneurs Expo, an event organized by Mujeres Emprendedoras de Ottawa-Gatineau, MELOG.

This expo drew together multi-talented women entrepreneurs who immigrated to Canada from Latin America. Just as this expo did, future ones will undoubtedly inspire other Latin women entrepreneurs to join, network, support each other and showcase the level of initiative, determination and success the Latin women of the national capital region have and will continue to achieve.

[Translation]

I would especially like to congratulate the three organizers and members of the board: Celia Soonets, a psychologist; Mercedes Valdivia, an educator; and Alejandra Ruiz, a graduate of the Guadalajara medical school in Mexico. I would also like to acknowledge the work of Carmen Chaman, who facilitated this event.

Congratulations to all participants on this great success and best wishes for future years.

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[English]

TAX EVASION

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our party and our government are demanding real accountability, including tough new expense rules for senators and real rules to crack down on tax evasion.

On the other hand, the Liberal leader defends a multi-million-dollar tax evader in his Senate caucus, and the NDP leader has shown little leadership in cracking down on tax evaders in his own caucus.

It is exactly this type of poor judgment that Canadians rejected in the last election. These tax evaders only remain in the Liberal and NDP caucuses because of the poor judgment of the leaders of the NDP and the Liberals.

It is clear that the Liberal leader is “Just-in” over his head.

If the NDP wants to call for higher taxes, like a carbon tax on everything, it should start by making an example of the tax evaders in its own caucus.

Canadians will not stand for tax evasion, and neither should the leaders of the NDP and the Liberal Party.

* * *

[Translation]

PRIME MINISTER OF CANADA

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when the Conservatives replaced the sponsorship scandal Liberals, they promised to do better.

Well, it must be said that they are doing better. It may hard to believe, but the Conservatives are indeed outdoing the Liberals in terms of scandals and bad management.

Oral Questions

Who would have thought that a Conservative government would preside over the sad spectacle of senators defrauding taxpayers?

When questions are asked, the Prime Minister adopts an innocent look and claims not to understand the question, yet it is simple. These questions address fraudulent spending by Conservative senators appointed by this Prime Minister, senators he defended tooth and nail until he no longer could. He still refuses to apologize. He still refuses to admit he made a mistake. He refuses to acknowledge that he is the leader of his caucus and the head of the government.

If he does not want to assume this responsibility, I know someone who does, and that is the NDP leader. He has all the experience required to take on the job.

Canadians deserve better than the scandals of either party. They deserve a different choice, and they will get it in 2015.

* * *

• (1415)

NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA

Ms. Joyce Bateman (Winnipeg South Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is working hard to reduce the tax burden on Canadian families. We have introduced over 150 tax cuts. Canadians are proud of that record, and they know that everyone has to pay their fair share to keep the ball rolling.

Unfortunately, the NDP does not seem to be getting the message. The member for Jeanne-Le Ber owes tens of thousands of dollars in unpaid taxes. Worse still, the NDP has been aware of the problem for a long time but covered it up.

If the NDP leader wants to burden Canadians with all kinds of new taxes, he should lead by example and send a clear message to his caucus: MPs must pay their taxes. That is the truth.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

ETHICS

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on what specific date did the Prime Minister first speak with Mike Duffy about his expenses?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has always been very clear. Members of Parliaments and senators should only make expense claims they are entitled to make, and if anyone expensed things that should not have been, they should immediately refund the money.

That is exactly the fact. That is exactly what he has done.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians want an answer from their Prime Minister.

However, if he will not answer, I will ask the minister a question he knows the answer to.

Oral Questions

Marjory LeBreton is a member of the Conservative cabinet. Did Senator Marjory LeBreton recuse herself from cabinet anytime the Senate expense scandal was discussed?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it was very clear. The Prime Minister only learned on Wednesday, May 15, that a cheque had been made by Mr. Wright. Mr. Wright has taken sole responsibility. He offered his resignation, and it was immediately accepted.

What we would like is to see the leader of the NDP come clean. Why did he take 17 long years before telling the police that he had been offered a bribe by the former mayor of Laval? He should stand in his place and give Canadians a real answer.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Senate concluded that Senator Duffy had billed taxpayers for campaign work for and on behalf of the Conservative Party during the most recent federal election campaign.

Did other Conservative senators do the same thing?

[*English*]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, any campaigning done on behalf of the Conservative Party has been paid for out of Conservative Party funds. That is something that was the case in the 2006, 2008 and 2011 elections.

The leader of the NDP still has not come clean with Canadians. Why did it take him 17 long years before he went public with the bribe he was offered in 1994?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that was not actually a very difficult question, but they do not seem to have understood. Let us try again.

Can the government tell us whether the RCMP has contacted the Prime Minister's Office since last week?

[*English*]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is well known that this issue is being considered by a number of independent bodies that were set up to independently look into these types of situations. The government has said very clearly that we will co-operate with these types of bodies.

In the spirit of co-operation, maybe of the leader of the NDP should co-operate with the Charbonneau commission and offer the information he has of bribes he was offered some 17 years ago.

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, once again the Conservatives refuse to answer simple questions.

During question period on Friday, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities revealed that Senator Duffy and the Prime Minister spoke about his expenses in February.

Would the government tell us how long they spoke and who else was involved?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when the issue of Senator Duffy's expenses came up and it was problematic, the Prime Minister said, which one would expect a

strong leader to say, that any expenses that were improperly billed should be immediately refunded, because that is what honest people do.

What honest people should also do is not wait 17 long years when they were offered a bribe and should have told the police the truth right away when it initially happened.

• (1420)

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Mary Dawson is carrying out a private inquiry into the matter of Nigel Wright, and the Senate Ethics Officer is carrying out a private inquiry into the matter of Mike Duffy.

Why not have one public inquiry to deal with the fact that Nigel Wright gave something to Mike Duffy? Would that not be simpler?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it was this House that brought in legislation giving the tools to independent watchdogs for them to be able to consider these matters. What we are simply doing is following Canadian law, as passed by this House, as passed by this Parliament, to look into these matters. This issue has been referred to at least two independent authorities. The government will completely co-operate with these authorities.

I wish the Liberal Party would co-operate with investigations into secret trust funds and offshore tax havens, too.

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the simple fact remains that a better way to do this would be to have a public inquiry, which would be able to call the Prime Minister, which would be able to call other members of the Prime Minister's staff, which would be able to call the relevant senators, which would be able to call Nigel Wright, which would have full powers with respect to compliance with the inquiry and which would be held in public, so in the light of day and in the light of sunshine everything would be clear. Why not do that?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this Parliament has spent a good number of months looking at strengthened legislation on ethics, giving new tools and new powers to parliamentary ethics watchdogs. We will fully co-operate with any of these reviews, as people would properly expect. These office holders have a significant amount of authority to conduct these investigations, and most importantly, they will report publicly on those investigations.

What we would like to see from the Liberal Party of Canada is for its members to come clean about the offshore tax havens with millions of dollars. Why will they not come clean with Canadians on that?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it would be much simpler and much fairer if there were just one inquiry. There are two people and two inquiries—two different ways of doing things.

Why not have a single public inquiry that would have the authority to talk to the Prime Minister, Mr. Wright and Mr. Duffy all at the same time and as part of the same process? Why complicate things?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the first piece of legislation the Prime Minister brought forward was legislation to have a single parliamentary ethics watchdog, one person who would review both the House of Commons and the Senate. It was this House of Commons that passed that legislation and, only when it met the hands of the Liberal Senate at the time, the Liberal Senate blocked that proposal and would not pass it. Shame on the Liberal Party.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is amusing to see the Liberals and Conservatives going back. Both have been supporting a whitewash of the Senate for 140 years. I do not think much is going to change now.

Conservatives have confirmed that Mike Duffy spoke to the Prime Minister in February, but they refused to explain anything about that. Will they tell us what the Prime Minister discussed with him? Was it that Mike Duffy could not afford to pay or that Mike Duffy did not want to pay? What commitments then did the Prime Minister make to this senator?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister said that for any member of Parliament or any senator who has expended money that was improper, the money should be immediately refunded. That is exactly what he said at this time.

We would like to see the NDP follow the Prime Minister's lead, answer the questions and say why it took 17 long years for Canadians not to be able to learn about these frauds. How much bribery went on in those 17 long years? How much money has been wasted with the Charbonneau commission if the leader of the NDP had not stayed silent?

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, here is the thing. The minister is telling us that the Prime Minister told Mike Duffy to immediately pay the money back, so then how did Nigel Wright get involved? Who told Nigel Wright to go and meet with Mike Duffy? That is what I would like to know, because who else in the Prime Minister's Office, if it was not the Prime Minister, gave Nigel Wright the authority to begin the negotiations with Mike Duffy, if that was the answer that had been given in February?

• (1425)

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Nigel Wright has taken sole responsibility. He has offered his resignation, and that resignation was immediately accepted by the Prime Minister. It is a tremendous honour and a tremendous privilege for Canadians to serve in the Parliament of Canada, and they should be here each and every day advancing the public interests and not advancing their own private interests.

Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the question was not answered on what commitments Mike Duffy made to the Prime Minister when they met, so I ask again. What commitments did Mike Duffy make to the Prime Minister when they met?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister was unaware of this deal until Wednesday, May 15. No commitments were made. What was said is that all members of Parliament are responsible to act ethically. All

members of Parliament in both Houses are expected to act honourably and to expense only those expenses they incurred and are allowed to under the law. This was not done in this case. These people should pay back the money.

All members of the House of Commons and all members of the Senate should act responsibly. It is a tremendous privilege and honour. People should be advancing the public interests and not their own interests. That is the deal with this Prime Minister. That is the deal with this government.

Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in the last six months, has the Prime Minister spoken to Pamela Wallin about her expenses?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Senator's expenses have been referred to the Board of Internal Economy in the other place. They are currently being reviewed. They are currently being reviewed by an outside auditing firm, and those reviews will both properly be made public.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last Thursday, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment said, "The Prime Minister himself has expressed deep regret for appointing Mike Duffy."

Can the government confirm that this is indeed the Prime Minister's point of view?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, no one is more disappointed than the Prime Minister about this conduct. Canadians expect better, and the Prime Minister of Canada expects better.

What Canadians expect also is for the NDP to come clean and answer this question: Why did it take 17 long years for the leader of the NDP to admit being offered cash in an envelope by the then mayor of Laval?

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, question period should be renamed "deflection period".

Since they refuse to confirm that appointing Mike Duffy was a mistake, can they tell us why they refuse to express sincere regret in that regard?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I answered the question as directly as I could. I said, yes, the Prime Minister is disappointed with their conduct in this regard. Canadians expect better. The Prime Minister expects better. That is why we are pleased that this has gone for review by a number of independent bodies. We will completely co-operate.

That is the type of co-operation the Charbonneau commission in Montreal needs when it is dealing with the corrupt behaviour the leader of the NDP met with some 17 years ago.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, here is another simple question that remains unanswered.

Oral Questions

The senators' inappropriate spending has been making headlines for months. Who in the Prime Minister's Office has been in charge of handling this issue from mid-February to now?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the bottom line is that every member of Parliament, every Senator, should not be expensing expenses that were not legitimately incurred. The Prime Minister has always been very clear that if anyone does that, they should repay that money. That is the standard Canadians expect, and that is the kind of leadership the Prime Minister has given.

[Translation]

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let us try to go beyond the Conservatives' lip service.

Aside from the Prime Minister's former chief of staff, who else at the PMO was aware of the discussions between Nigel Wright and Mike Duffy? Who?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this question has been answered, and I will answer it again.

Mr. Wright has accepted sole responsibility for his personal action. The Prime Minister learned about this issue only after it became public. A few days after that, Mr. Wright offered his resignation, and the Prime Minister immediately accepted it.

[Translation]

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government still has not committed to releasing all the documents concerning the agreement between Nigel Wright and Mike Duffy.

Will it now commit to releasing these documents?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have said that we will co-operate with the relevant authorities that this House of Commons has tasked with reviewing these types of matters. We will fully co-operate with those reviews, as people would properly expect.

• (1430)

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, did Nigel Wright resign, or was he fired? Will we find out what monetary compensation he receives, either as severance or as separation pay?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear. Mr. Wright has accepted full responsibility for his error in this matter. He offered his resignation. The resignation was accepted. Mr. Wright will receive only the minimum amount required by law.

[Translation]

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, was a work contract drawn up when Nigel Wright was hired? Did that contract stipulate what would happen if he were fired? Will the government release all the documents concerning Nigel Wright's hiring, employment and firing?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there are standard operating practices for ministerial exempt staff, and they were followed in this regard.

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, are taxpayers on the hook for the lawyer Mr. Nigel Wright has hired, the previous chief of staff to the Prime Minister, Mr. Guy Giorno?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it will come as no surprise to the member opposite that I am not going to speculate in terms of what Mr. Wright is or is not doing. I have no idea.

What I do know is that the leader of the Liberal Party is standing up for the status quo. He is pitting one region of this country against the other. What Canadians want is their political leadership to accept responsibility, to seek reform of the Senate, to seek elections to the Senate and to seek real change. Only the Liberal Party is standing in the way of that. Shame on the Liberal Party for its lack of leadership and for supporting the status quo.

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NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, undue political interference is not just happening at the PMO. The office of the Minister of National Defence requested that the independent national investigative service track down how a defence journalist got information on a military exercise with our allies. Of course, the information came from a U.S. Navy press release, a fact noted in the story.

Why did the minister push the independent NIS, a branch of the military police, to go after a journalist? Does the minister have a problem with the media reporting on the facts?

Hon. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay (Associate Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, members of the House have previously expressed concern about the unauthorized disclosure of information by National Defence. Information is shared through many avenues. Of course, access to information and proactive communication are but two examples. In a department like National Defence, security of information is critical, and there are established procedures and processes to release information and remain vigilant. However, when information is inappropriately released, we expect the department to follow through on how it happened.

[Translation]

Ms. Éline Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Forces National Investigation Service is not meant to be used by a minister who wants to investigate a journalist who is bothering him.

The minister's office is clearly involved in this witch hunt. The Minister of National Defence is going after a journalist who used information from a press release. He is picking on a journalist for doing his job. The Canadian Forces National Investigation Service currently has five investigations under way concerning this journalist. Yes, five.

Why is the Minister of National Defence using an independent investigation service for a witch hunt?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay (Associate Minister of National Defence, CPC): Again, Mr. Speaker, in a department like National Defence, as I said, security information is critical. There are established procedures and processes.

DND is developing a robust and comprehensive departmental security plan as part of a complete review of security policies and procedures. That is scheduled to be completed in 2014, with an interim report this fall. This is a very significant undertaking involving areas such as security screening, physical network and personnel security as well as all policies and procedures required to integrate them.

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*[Translation]***FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on a completely different topic, 61 countries, including some of the biggest arms exporters in the world, are prepared to sign an arms trade treaty. Canada, however, is missing in action. This treaty will prevent the arms trade from fueling conflicts in areas such as Syria, Sudan and the DRC.

Why are the Conservatives not taking a firm stance against the illegal trade in arms by immediately signing this treaty?

• (1435)

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from my friend, the member opposite. I also appreciated the same question I got from the Liberal Party last week.

Canada already has some of the highest standards in the export and control of munitions. We believe that any treaty regarding the sale of munitions that helps move the international community closer to world-leading standards is a good thing.

We participated actively in these discussions. I think we have an obligation to listen before we act, and that is why we will be consulting with Canadians before the government takes any decision.

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is about the regulation of global trade in weapons. It is not about domestic use. The minister has had two months to figure this out. Why does he not just sign? It is time to sign this accord.

Every year, half a million people die because of the illegal trade in arms. Why is the government failing to join the rest of the world in limiting the arms that go to some of the hottest conflicts in the world? In fact, right now, when we are talking about Syria, we are talking about arms going to Syria. It is time to stop that. Sign the deal now.

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to sending weapons and arms to Syria, many countries, including some of our allies, publicly contemplated doing that, and nothing in this treaty would stop that, I would say very directly to the member opposite. We have very strong domestic regulations with respect to the export of both arms and munitions.

What we do not want to see is the NDP and their friends in the Liberal Party try to bring in through the back door a long gun registry that would only hurt law-abiding sportsmen and only hurt law-abiding hunters and farmers. This is what the Liberals and the NDP want to do in the next election, and I want to assure members that we will not let them get away with it.

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PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the past few years, communities across the country have been deeply affected by tragedies related to bullying, cyberbullying and intimidation. There have been far too many tragedies.

We know that the heartbreaking headlines do not begin to tell the full story. Reports that one in three adolescent Canadian students say that they have been bullied are extremely troubling. Could the Minister of Canadian Heritage please update the House on our government's support for an important project that will help youth take action against bullying?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Jamie Hubley was 15 years old when, after months of torment and cruelty and bullying, he committed suicide. Amanda Todd, from my community, was 15 years old also when she committed suicide after being anonymously hounded and harassed online by some of her fellow students.

Today I was pleased to announce a new partnership with the Canadian Red Cross to empower over 50,000 young Canadians from across the country and give them the tools they need in their own classrooms, in their own schools and in their own communities across the country to stand up against those who cruelly and viciously attack kids with cyberbullying.

I know that members of Parliament from all parties in the House have called for the government to take action when it comes to cyberbullying and the cruelty our kids face. Today we announced a bold national plan with the Red Cross, and I want to thank all members of Parliament for supporting this effort.

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INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, municipal leaders gathered in Vancouver this weekend to tackle the \$171-billion infrastructure deficit. They wondered why Conservatives ignored the FCM's call for dedicated public transit funding and voted down the NDP's national transit strategy.

Now the Ontario government is asking for a meeting to partner with the federal government to break traffic gridlock. Will the minister meet with Canada's largest province, or does he plan to ignore it also?

Oral Questions

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, let me quote Michael Roschlaw, president and CEO of the Canadian Urban Transit Association: "Never before has a federal government invested so much in public transit". We have been a great partner since 2006 for public transit. We will continue to do so, and I hope they will vote for the budget.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives' new building Canada plan simply does not do enough to tackle the \$171 billion infrastructure deficit facing Canadian municipalities. We now know that the announcement of billions of dollars over 10 years actually represents a cut.

When Montrealers have to boil their water and drivers wonder whether they are on the streets of Beirut, not those of a major city in Quebec, we have every right to wonder when the government will invest enough money so that we can upgrade all of our infrastructure.

• (1440)

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, it was an honour to announce the biggest infrastructure plan in this country's history, made possible by this Prime Minister, in our latest budget.

This NDP member still does not understand. He thinks that we need to manage cities on behalf of mayors. I know that some MPs would like to become mayor, since they think that we have to manage everything from Ottawa. The city of Montreal is managed by the mayor of Montreal. We will not start deciding which streets to pave. That is what the member would like us to do.

We make the money available, and it will be there.

* * *

[*English*]

AIR TRANSPORTATION

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for many Arctic communities, the only viable travel option is by air, but many northern airports are so old, air carriers are having to downgrade, flying smaller and slower airplanes. This makes life in northern communities more challenging and more expensive.

Conservatives have claimed that there is money, but a new report indicates that it is not enough for the much needed northern upgrades. When is the government going to make improving access to Arctic communities a real priority?

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, at Transport Canada, safety is the top priority in every region of the country. Since 2006, the Government

of Canada has invested \$38 million in 20 safety-related projects in airports in the north. Canada has one of the safest transportation systems in the world, and it gets even stronger every single year.

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SEARCH AND RESCUE

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government closed the Kitsilano Coast Guard station with no consultation and without even producing a risk analysis report. Now, three of five B.C. marine communication and traffic services centres will also close.

Similar cuts in the Arctic meant mariners went without emergency radio service for over a week. Marine safety experts are warning us that these closures are too risky.

How can British Columbians trust that these new closures will not put more lives at risk on B.C.'s coast?

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have indicated many times in the House, our first and foremost priority is the safety of mariners and people at sea.

Our government is investing in the Coast Guard's infrastructure to take advantage of today's technology to deliver the same service at strategic locations across the country. Better-connected centres equipped with modern technology will ensure improved effectiveness and reliability of services.

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41ST GENERAL ELECTION

Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a Federal Court judge has found that dirty tactics were used to try and disrupt Canadians' right to vote in the last federal election. The judge found widespread electoral fraud in many ridings. Instead of being concerned about attacks on voters, Conservative MPs are attacking the Federal Court judge. Why are Conservatives attacking judges, rather than getting to the bottom of this crime?

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, an ultra-partisan group lost the last election, and now it has lost in court. The party brought forward an ultra-partisan court effort without producing a single, solitary person who was prevented from voting by a telephone call or a robocall. It was this absence of evidence that caused the court to rule that there is no evidence linking the Conservative Party to any inappropriate or illegal calls.

Oral Questions

Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Federal Court confirmed that there was fraud, so the fact is there was fraud. Additionally, the court found that the most likely source of the information used to commit fraud was the Conservatives' secret database. Why would Conservative MPs object to the Federal Court's fraud findings if they were not trying to protect the criminals responsible?

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would encourage my hon. colleague to actually read the judgment, which found that there was no evidence linking the Conservative Party or its officials, or its candidates in fact, to any wrongful activity in this regard. In fact, the ultra-partisan group that brought forward this case failed to produce a single solitary voter in all of Canada who was prevented from voting by a robocall or a telephone call.

* * *

● (1445)

[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse (Louis-Saint-Laurent, NDP): Mr. Speaker, violent storms in the Quebec City area this past weekend resulted in the flooding of more than 500 homes. The residents of L'Ancienne-Lorette are reliving the nightmare that rained down on them in 2005. The strong rains would not have had the same impact if the necessary infrastructure had been in place.

Can the Minister of Public Safety confirm that he has contacted his Quebec counterpart about this matter? Can he assure us that he will work with the provincial and municipal authorities on this file?

[English]

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, of course our thoughts and prayers go out to those who have lost property or even worse in some of these very serious situations.

Under the DFAA, the federal government stands with the provinces to work together to compensate for these losses. Indeed, in some of these cases the federal government pays up to 90% of the losses under the DFAA. We respond to provincial inquiries in this respect, and we would certainly be pleased to look at the entire file.

* * *

[Translation]

HEALTH

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): First came the nickel and iron dust. Then, this weekend, coal dust from the Port of Québec settled on my region.

Every time I have asked the minister a question about this, he has evaded it by saying that the port is an independent organization that is doing its job. However, the minister is forgetting that he is responsible for enforcing environmental legislation in the ports.

Does the minister understand the principle of ministerial accountability? Is he waiting for all the elements of the periodic table to fall on our heads before taking action?

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, from the beginning, the member has been speaking with the people at the Port of Québec on a regular basis.

On April 3, the member met with management of the port authority, but he does not seem to understand the explanations he was given.

At the meeting with the president and CEO, Mario Girard, they told him about everything that was happening, and he said he was pleased with what he saw and with the action taken to correct the situation. He said that he was truly reassured. The member seems to go any which way the wind blows. I believe the best direction is the one the Port of Québec is going in.

* * *

[English]

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Dan Albas (Okanagan—Coquihalla, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my constituents want honest billing practices and reasonable contracts from their cellphone and wireless providers. Our government has taken concrete steps to protect consumers and today, the CRTC has unveiled a new wireless code of conduct.

Could the President of the Treasury Board update the House on the great work that is being done to help protect Canadian consumers?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me first thank the hon. member for the question because it shows how connected he is to his local community and is representing its views.

We on the government side are happy to see this new wireless code. It puts consumers first. It addresses the key issues such as contract length and the exploding roaming charges, and some of us are aware of those, and other data charges as well. These are steps in the right direction.

I can assure the chamber that this government will continue to foster greater competition to provide Canadians with more choices at better prices in every region of this country.

*Oral Questions***EMPLOYMENT**

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, youth unemployment is twice the national average and hundreds of thousands of young Canadians are just not able to find work, yet the Conservative government continues to run television ads at \$90,000 a crack advertising a program that does not even exist. The jobs grant program has not passed Parliament and the government has not even begun negotiations with the provinces. It has more caveats and disclaimers than a Rob Ford press conference.

What is sad here is, where are the fiscal Conservatives who are supposed to care about tax dollars? Why do they not stand—

The Speaker: The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources.

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear. Economic action plan 2013 has put in place and will put forward 5,000 new internships for young Canadians. The Canada youth employment strategy employs over 36,000 young Canadians every year. In fact, since the start of this government, 2.1 million young Canadians have been newly employed.

I look forward to the opposition member getting on board and supporting young Canadians, so they can be employed so that we can make sure they all have opportunities in the future.

* * *

● (1450)

HEALTH

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, desperate Canadians are heading overseas to buy organs on the black market only to see these organs fail when they come back home. They end up in hospital and tragically some have died. As we have debated in the House, unfortunately this is not a new situation.

After seven years in power, why is the government still dragging its feet on the critical need for a national registry for organ transplants?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and Minister for the Arctic Council, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is absolutely playing a leadership role when it comes to establishing a registry. We are working with various organizations, like Hélène Campbell's initiatives, to establish a registry for individuals who want to make an organ donation. It will be the first of its kind in this country.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Ed Holder (London West, CPC): Mr. Speaker,

The Dippers have denied their environment roots,
Taken up with the Liberals—they're all in cahoots.
Their leader is angry, storm clouds of deceit,
A tax on everything, clothes, gas, and meat.

An inconvenient truth, they travel abroad,
Job-killing speeches akin to fraud.

Thirty per cent-GHGs did increase,
Under the Liberal watch, a gaseous feast.

Mull this over complete with care,
The Dippers and Libs would do nothing for air.

The good news for us in environment week,
Is our sector-by-sector approach that is sleek.

Could the minister update us all today?
And lift the debate above the fray.

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for London West for his rhyming couplets and a very good question.

This government has addressed climate change. We have regulated reductions in greenhouse gases while still growing the economy. We have put forward a plan to improve air quality for all Canadians.

In this Environment Week, I would advise all Canadians to examine our impressive record, because when it comes to our land, our water and air, people can count on this government to manage with care.

* * *

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, three years ago the Department of Fisheries and Oceans declared nearly 1,000 lighthouses surplus, including the one on Sambro Island that is the oldest in North America, built in 1758. They were hoping that non-profit community organizations were going to be able to pick up the slack, but many of these lighthouses are simply too expensive to maintain.

I want to ask the minister a question. Will he do right thing? Will he ensure that these heritage, iconic lighthouses are maintained by supporting these community organizations?

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this program of sponsoring out-of-use lighthouses and sponsoring working lighthouses has been very successful.

We have received over 300 nominations. The boards are working through these applications. We have named a number just in the last couple of weeks, and we will continue with this very worthy program.

* * *

[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ): Mr. Speaker, experts and the police are confirming that Vito Rizzuto has regained influence over the Montreal Mafia. Whether we are talking about the Hells Angels or street gangs, the criminal element has hit cruising speed. Things are back to normal and business is booming. While the Mafia is renewing its allegiances and regaining power, the Conservative government is abolishing the police officer recruitment fund and jeopardizing the operations of prevention agencies, such as the Maison d'Haïti street crews.

Does the Minister of Public Safety understand that we need resources to fight crime, to fight criminal groups, and to protect our young people?

Oral Questions

[English]

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would remind the member that the issue of policing is a provincial matter, but we do work very closely with our provincial colleagues.

We have passed many laws involving mandatory minimum prison sentences and laws relating to organized crime. Unfortunately, members of the opposition have consistently opposed those measures.

* * *

[Translation]

PUBLIC WORKS AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour, BQ): Mr. Speaker, again today, we learn that two ministers got mixed up in the contract awarding process for relocating federal employees. The Auditor General found irregularities in this file when the previous Liberal government was in power, and the Conservative government is no better. Everything is controlled by the Prime Minister's Office and cabinet, and the list of interferences keeps growing.

When will the government stop politicizing public tenders and public service decisions?

• (1455)

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is false. As President of the Treasury Board, I can say that the Minister of Public Safety has a responsibility to verify that due diligence has been exercised with regard to the contract. In response to the criticisms by the Auditor General's office about the contract that the Liberals awarded unfairly, our government launched a new request for proposals for the relocation contract, using a fair and transparent process.

[English]

I would say that we have done everything according to proper procedure.

* * *

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in January, as protests occurred across Canada, the Prime Minister said he would take responsibility for progress on aboriginal issues.

Months later, where are we? First nations, Inuit and Metis are wondering if the government agreed to change its ways while having absolutely no intention of following through. The only action we have seen from the government is pushing through its own legislative agenda that first nations object to.

When is the government going to live up to its promises?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fact is, we are following up with first nations, Metis and Inuit all across this country. In recent months, I have been travelling across the country to hear many aboriginal leaders, Metis leaders, Inuit leaders. We are making progress and we will continue in the quest for reconciliation in Canada.

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Shawn Atleo sent a simple message this weekend. The level of unrest this summer will depend on whether the Prime Minister is willing to follow through on his commitment to aboriginal people.

Can the Prime Minister tell us who the high-level person is in the Prime Minister's Office responsible for implementing the January 11 agreement?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there are in fact senior oversight committees that have been instituted following the January 11 meeting. These oversight committees are meeting regularly. They are making progress, and I hope that in due course we can make them public.

* * *

JUSTICE

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when Dr. Porter was chair of SIRC, he was in possession of some of Canada's most sensitive information. He is now languishing in one of Panama's most notorious prisons in the presence of pimps, drug dealers and organized crime.

Can the government tell us what steps it has taken to get Dr. Porter out of his Panamanian jail in order to face justice and in order to be put into a secure Canadian facility?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out that our government has been following this issue very closely. We are very pleased that there was an arrest in this matter. We congratulate the authorities on a successful arrest.

While I cannot comment on a specific case, I can say that anyone involved in corruption must face the full force of the law, and our government will take the steps necessary to ensure that happens.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians remain very concerned about the ongoing conflict in Syria. Hundreds of lives have been lost, thousands have been displaced and basic freedoms are denied to many.

Can the Minister of Foreign Affairs update this House on the current situation in Syria?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are deeply concerned about the violence in Syria, the tens of thousands of people who have lost their lives as well as the millions of people who have been displaced internally and have had to seek refuge outside of their borders.

Canada is playing a leadership role with respect to humanitarian assistance. We are one of the top six or seven countries in providing and actually delivering aid to both UN organizations and bilaterally to some countries. We will continue to be actively engaged with this and continue to increase our support as it is warranted.

Government Orders

[Translation]

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans.

He should know that sandbars along the coast of the Acadian peninsula are blocking port access channels and endangering fishers' lives. Just last week, another four fishers were trapped on sandbars and more were stranded at sea.

What will he do to speed up dredging so that fishers' lives are no longer in danger?

• (1500)

[English]

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if I understand the question, I believe it is around small craft harbours.

Of course, we have an annual budget to invest in small craft harbours across the country, which is done on a priority basis. Everything is assessed on an annual basis to determine which ones will be fixed during a season.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: That concludes question period for today.

Canadian Forces Day is an opportunity for Canadians across the country to recognize the sacrifices that our men and women in uniform make on our behalf.

It is with great pleasure that I draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of 12 members of the Canadian Forces who are taking part in Canadian Forces Day today.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

* * *

[Translation]

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I believe that it is very important for all members of the House to respect people from other countries.

I understand that some members can get pretty excited when expressing themselves and asking questions, but I found it insulting when the member for Trois-Rivières said, "Drivers wonder whether they are on the streets of Beirut, not those of a major city in Quebec".

I think that we should respect all peoples, not just the people of Beirut and Lebanon, but also Canadians and Quebecers of Lebanese origin who would not appreciate comments like that. I therefore ask the member to apologize.

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, of course I will apologize if my comments offended anyone in Quebec. That was not even remotely my intention.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

SAFER WITNESSES ACT

The House resumed from May 30 consideration of the motion that Bill C-51, An Act to amend the Witness Protection Program Act and to make a consequential amendment to another Act, be read the third time and passed.

The Speaker: Pursuant to an order made on Wednesday, May 22, 2012, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at the third reading stage of Bill C-51.

Call in the members.

• (1510)

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

(Division No. 710)

YEAS

Members

Adams	Adler
Aglukkaq	Albas
Albrecht	Alexander
Allen (Welland)	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambler
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Andrews
Angus	Armstrong
Ashfield	Ashton
Aspin	Aubin
Ayala	Baird
Bateman	Bélanger
Benoit	Bergen
Bernier	Bezan
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe
Blaney	Block
Borg	Boughen
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brisson	Brosseau
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Butt	Byrne
Calandra	Calkins
Cannan	Carmichael
Caron	Carrie
Casey	Cash
Charlton	Chicoine
Chisholm	Chisu
Chong	Choquette
Chow	Christopherson
Clarke	Cleary
Clement	Comartin
Côté	Crockatt
Crowder	Cuzner
Daniel	Davidson
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Vancouver East)
Day	Dechert
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dewar	Dion
Dionne Labelle	Donnelly
Doré Lefebvre	Dreeschen
Dubé	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Dusseau	Dykstra
Easter	Eyking
Fantino	Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Fletcher	Foote
Freeman	Galipeau
Gallant	Garneau
Garrison	Genest

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

Routine Proceedings

Young (Vancouver South) Zimmer— 268

NAYS

Nil

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to)

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS*[English]***EXPORT DEVELOPMENT CANADA**

Mr. Gerald Keddy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, a document entitled the Canada Account Annual Report, 2011-2012.

* * *

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to two petitions.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 57th, 58th and 59th reports of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs in relation to the reports of the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for the provinces of Saskatchewan, British Columbia and Quebec.

* * *

CRIMINAL CODE

Mrs. Kelly Block (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-517, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (trafficking in persons).

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce my private member's bill, C-517, an act to amend the Criminal Code (trafficking in persons). Three years ago, this House unanimously passed a bill to enact a mandatory minimum sentence for those found guilty of human trafficking of minors. On that day Canada sent a clear message that human trafficking is simply abhorrent. However, our work is not done. According to the United Nations' global report on human trafficking, 73% of victims are adults.

It is time for Parliament to take action to close this legal gap. My bill would amend the Criminal Code to put in place a mandatory minimum sentence for anyone found guilty of trafficking of a person 18 years of age or older and would send a strong message that the trafficking of humans is simply wrong, regardless of age.

Routine Proceedings

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

* * *

PROTECTING TAXPAYERS AND REVOKING PENSIONS OF CONVICTED POLITICIANS ACT

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-518, An Act to amend the Members of Parliament Retiring Allowances Act (withdrawal allowance).

He said: Mr. Speaker, the alternative title of the bill I am putting forward today is the protecting taxpayers and revoking pensions of convicted politicians act. Should this bill become law, it would revoke the parliamentary pensions of any senator or elected member convicted of an offence under any act of Parliament for which the maximum punishment is imprisonment for more than two years.

There are two points I would like to highlight on this bill.

First, the way the bill is written, those people found guilty are not required to serve a sentence of more than two years. It is simply that the maximum penalty be two years or more. Therefore, there could be a member who is sentenced for a period of six months, as was the case at one point with a not so honourable member from the other place.

Second, this bill would be made retroactive to today, June 3, 2013. In doing so, I have adopted the aim and intent of a bill from Nova Scotia, which followed the same precedent.

Therefore, I ask that this bill be brought forward for debate in the House.

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

* * *

EXCISE TAX ACT

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-519, an act to amend the Excise Tax Act (motor vehicle fuel).

He said: Mr. Speaker, a second bill I would like to move today is the ending gasoline tax on tax act. The bill aims to amend the Excise Tax Act so that GST and HST are no longer levied on any federal or provincial excise tax charged on fuel for motor vehicles.

I believe the bill would be in line with our government's priority to balance the books by 2015 and would fit nicely into that schedule.

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

* * *

●(1515)

SUPPORTING NON-PARTISAN AGENTS OF PARLIAMENT ACT

Mr. Mark Adler (York Centre, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-520, an act supporting non-partisan agents of Parliament.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to introduce an act supporting non-partisan agents of Parliament. The act would establish a requirement for all persons who apply for a position in

the office of an agent of Parliament to make a declaration stating whether, in the 10 years before applying for that position, they occupied specified politically partisan positions. For successful candidates, these declarations would be posted online.

The act would also require the persons who work in the office of an agent of Parliament and these agents to make a declaration if they intend to occupy a politically partisan position while continuing to occupy their positions. These declarations would also be posted online.

As well, the act would require an agent of Parliament and the persons who work in his or her office to provide a written undertaking that they will conduct themselves in a non-partisan manner in fulfilling the official duties and responsibilities of their positions.

Agents of Parliament are given the important mandate to perform non-partisan duties in Parliament, and the public has a right to know whether or not the agents or those who work in these offices are engaging in political activities.

This would help protect the institution of Parliament and bring more transparency and accountability into the Canadian political process.

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

* * *

NAVIGABLE WATERS PROTECTION ACT

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-521, an act to amend the Navigable Waters Protection Act (Nottawasaga River).

She said: Mr. Speaker, in March, I read an article about AWARE Simcoe, which is a citizens group that is looking to protect the Nottawasaga River. AWARE Simcoe points out that this is a river of major historical importance. It has played a large part in the creation of the county, and it has been protected under the Navigable Waters Protection Act since 1882.

As we all know, this piece of legislation was gutted by the Conservatives last fall and the Nottawasaga River is no longer protected. Despite the fact that the Conservatives will not act, I am proud to stand here today to present this bill that would actually ensure this river is protected.

I think today is the first step in ensuring that rainbow trout and other species and ecosystems of the Nottawasaga are protected and that the people who care deeply for this river are given the tools to ensure it is enjoyed by future generations.

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

* * *

NAVIGABLE WATERS PROTECTION ACT

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-522, an act to amend the Navigable Waters Protection Act (Saskatchewan lakes).

She said: Mr. Speaker, it is my honour, today, to present a bill to reinstate Saskatchewan lakes into the Navigable Waters Protection Act. Reindeer Lake, Cree Lake, Lac la Ronge, Lac Churchill, Old Wives Lake, Last Mountain Lake, Buffalo Pound Lake, Big Quill Lake, Little Quill Lake, Katepwa Lake, Goose Lake and Redberry Lake all must come under this act.

These lakes, if left unprotected, could mean the loss of clean drinking water for the people of Saskatchewan, including those who live in Regina and Moose Jaw. Protecting these waterways would also preserve the habitat of unique wildlife.

Today, these waterways are the source of livelihood and quality of life for people across Saskatchewan.

The future lies in protecting these waterways. I am proud of our NDP team standing up for the people of Saskatchewan and calling upon the government to act.

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

* * *

PETITIONS

LYME DISEASE

Mr. Gordon Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am rising today to present a petition signed by a number of my constituents in Leeds—Grenville. The petitioners call on the government to support Bill C-442, An Act respecting a National Lyme Disease Strategy.

• (1520)

CANADA POST

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to table.

The first petition is a call for the government to cease closure of the Sandwich Towne post office. Unfortunately, the government has chosen to go ahead with that. Councillor Ron Jones and I were actually in the building the other day, and we were mortified by the condition of the building. The petitioners would like answers, and we would like to see that it at least go to the community.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is in regard to pet coke, which is now being stored on the Detroit River. The petitioners call for the Minister of the Environment to invoke the International Joint Commission.

This pet coke is a by-product of manufactured bitumen at a Marathon plant, and now it is stored right on the riverfront with very little regulation and oversight. There are actually other locations that are now starting to get these, including the one in Essex County that has also emerged.

GENETICALLY MODIFIED ALFALFA

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition from a number of constituents in my riding of Dufferin—Caledon who are concerned about the issue of genetically modified alfalfa. Among a number of things, they are concerned that organic farming prohibits the use of genetic modification and that the organic sector in Canada depends on alfalfa as a high-protein feed

Routine Proceedings

for dairy cattle and other livestock, and as an important soil builder. The petitioners ask that the government impose a moratorium on the release of genetically modified alfalfa in order to allow a proper review of the impact on farmers in Canada.

PEACE

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I rise today to table a petition signed by hundreds of local residents who are urging the government to establish a department of peace, headed by a minister of peace as a senior cabinet position, and that this department should reinvigorate Canada's role as a global peace builder. I am pleased to table this petition and I look forward to the government's response.

[Translation]

ANIMAL TRANSPORTATION

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be presenting two petitions today.

The first petition is from one of my constituents, who calls on the government to strengthen animal transportation regulations.

DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition concerns Development and Peace.

This petition is presented by people in Saint-Noël-Chabanel and the parish of St-François-de-Sales in my riding. For the sake of international solidarity, they want the government to fully restore the \$49.2 million in funding sought by Development and Peace for the next five years.

[English]

SEARCH AND RESCUE

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present two petitions.

The first is to save the Kitsilano Coast Guard station. The petitioners say that the recent decision by the federal government to close the Kitsilano station is a grave mistake that will undoubtedly cost lives of those in peril on the shores and waters near Vancouver harbour. They call on the Government of Canada to rescind this decision and reinstate funding to maintain the Kitsilano Coast Guard station.

SHARK FINNING

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I also submit a petition calling on the House to ban the import of shark fins. The petitioners say measures must be taken to stop the global practice of shark finning and ensure the responsible conservation and management of sharks. They call on the Government of Canada to immediately legislate a ban on the importation of shark fins to Canada.

Routine Proceedings

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the students and staff at David Suzuki Secondary School in Brampton, Ontario, wish to protest the Canadian government's lack of concern for the environment, including the dismantling of environmental protection through omnibus bills, the withdrawal from the Kyoto accord, the continued pollution of our waters and the continued rise of carbon emissions and other greenhouse gases in our atmosphere.

The petitioners request that the government take immediate action to protect our future and the future of the planet.

INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to table from Canadians from White Rock, B.C.; from Esterhazy, Regina, North Battleford and Saskatoon in Saskatchewan; from Leduc, Calgary, Grimshaw, Pincher Creek and Red Deer in Alberta; from Brandon, Manitoba; and from Hay River, Northwest Territories.

The petitioners call on Parliament to address its failure to deliver on Parliament's commitment in 2005 to increase development assistance to 0.7% of GDP, to end the freeze on foreign aid and to restore the NGO partnerships in aid.

• (1525)

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today with a happier spring in my step with a petition from residents of Sooke, Duncan and Salt Spring Island calling on the government to take a different look at the Enbridge northern gateway pipeline.

It certainly is encouraging that the Government of British Columbia has said that the current proposal does not meet its standards because the proponent, Enbridge, has failed to provide evidence that would assure the B.C. government it has any capability to deal with spills along the pipeline route.

LYME DISEASE

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is on the subject of the private member's bill I put forward, Bill C-442, calling for a national Lyme disease strategy. These petitioners from Saskatoon, Saskatchewan and Brampton, Ontario, join with many thousands of others across Canada hoping the House can be united in seeking help for those who are suffering from Lyme disease and in providing greater prevention and information so that we will reduce the spread of this terrible disease.

PARKS CANADA

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions. One is from Canadians from coast to coast asking the Government of Canada to not reduce the hours of operation of the Rideau Canal and the Trent-Severn Waterway. They note that they are both national historic sites and represent a significant part of our Canadian heritage, are renowned all over the world for their natural beauty and as engineering marvels and are a vital part of the economies in their respective regions.

MOTOR VEHICLE SAFETY

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from folks in Toronto. Petitioners are asking the Government of Canada to introduce a regulation under the Motor Vehicle Safety Act requiring aerodynamic side guards for trucks and trailers to prevent cyclists and pedestrians from being pulled under the wheels of these vehicles. They note that side guards on trucks have been a legal requirement in the U.K. and the European Union for many years, and there has been a significant drop in pedestrian and cyclist fatalities in these countries. They point out it is in fact a key recommendation by the Chief Coroner for Ontario in his study on how to keep cyclists and pedestrians safe.

IMPAIRED DRIVING

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to present petitions from constituents from the Fraser Valley. The first is a petition that highlights the sad fact that last year 22-year-old Kassandra Kaulius was killed by a drunk driver. A group of people called Families for Justice, who have also lost loved ones to impaired drivers, is asking for new mandatory minimum sentencing for those people convicted of impaired driving causing death.

SEX SELECTION

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition relates to gendercide. Petitioners highlight that sex selection is happening in Canada. All the national parties in Parliament have condemned this practice, and 92% of Canadians condemn sex selection. They are asking Parliament to condemn discrimination against females occurring through sex-selective pregnancy termination.

PENSIONS

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition from many Canadians who are very concerned about the changes that the government has made to old age security by increasing the age of eligibility from 65 to 67. They point out that this change has a profoundly negative impact on the poorest seniors and that in fact those two extra years of waiting for OAS and GIS would take about \$12,000 out of the pockets of the average senior. This creates profound instability in households where there is not enough money.

In that regard, petitioners are asking the Government of Canada to return the age of eligibility of old age security to age 65 and increase the investment in the guaranteed income supplement in order to lift every Canadian senior out of poverty,

*Routine Proceedings***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. 1311, 1312, 1313 and 1315.

[Text]

Question No. 1311—**Mr. Malcolm Allen:**

With regard to the horse meat contamination of imported goods: (a) what is the policy of the government in dealing with these products; (b) what percentage of imported meat is tested for horse meat contamination; (c) how many incidents of horse meat contamination have been discovered in the last 12 months, listed by product type, including all pertinent designations, port of discovery, date of discovery, total weight of contaminated goods, percentage of horse meat discovered in each case of contamination, all details about handling and packaging of each case of contamination, country of origin, shipper, receiver, distributor, intended destination, intended final product; (d) what action was taken upon discovery of each case of contamination; (e) how many cases of horse meat contaminated products were (i) sent back to the shipper, (ii) ordered destroyed, (iii) allowed to continue to their destination, (iv) made their way or were presumed to have made their way into the food system for human consumption; and (f) what are the brand names of products contaminated with horse meat sold to Canadians?

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), unidentified mixing of meat from different species is not permitted in Canada. Under the authority of the Meat Inspection Act and Regulations, the Food and Drugs Act and Regulations, and the Consumer Packaging and Labelling Act and Regulations, meat cuts, organs, and other carcass parts must be identified on labels with proper common names, including species names. This applies to meat from any species, including equine. The meat import program is designed to ensure imported meat products are equivalent to Canadian standards. The competent authority of the country of origin as well as any plant within that country must be CFIA approved before Canada will permit export of meat products into Canada. CFIA approval is only granted after an in depth and lengthy review to ensure that equivalency with Canadian standards can be achieved.

In addition, all types of imported meat products, including processed products, are subject to random testing to verify compliance with Canadian law. Random samples of all imported meat products are tested and, should a violation be identified, the shipment is rejected for entry into Canada. In such a case, the competent authority of the exporting country as well as the exporting plant must isolate the source of the problem, develop and implement a corrective plan and demonstrate that the appropriate corrective action has been taken. Once these steps have been satisfactorily completed, export of meat products to Canada may resume under intensified CFIA testing. Sampling and testing return to the normal frequency only once compliance with Canadian standards has been established through a series of consecutive acceptable test results.

With regard to (b), species verification testing is based upon risk and varies year to year. This testing is not carried out to ensure safety. This testing is primarily aimed at the detection of fraudulent practices. As Canada does not import a significant percentage of the meat consumed domestically, the sampling and testing is carried out in a prescriptive manner when shipments are received or when CFIA inspection staff feel there is a potential issue.

With regard to (c), (d), (e) and (f), no positive samples were identified with horsemeat in any products.

Question No. 1312—**Mr. Dennis Bevington:**

With regard to Giant Mine in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, from the time the mine entered production in 1948 until ceasing operations in 2004, what was the total amount (not adjusted for inflation) paid to Canada in royalties for the over seven million ounces of gold produced by the mine?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, based on an assessment of historical documents going back into the 1940s, the total royalties paid to the Government of Canada from all of the mines located on the Giant claim block, including Giant, Lolor and Supercrest, is approximately \$4 million, based on the 4%-5% royalties in effect at the time.

Question No. 1313—**Hon. Ralph Goodale:**

With regard to the Agroforestry Development Centre: (a) have any studies been conducted, either internally within the government or by external consultants or advisors, to identify the costs or benefits of the proposed divestiture of the Agroforestry Development Centre at Indian Head, Saskatchewan, including any possible continuation of any science or research activity at the existing site or elsewhere; (b) who prepared the studies; (c) when were those studies completed; and (d) what were the detailed results of any such study?

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), the answer is yes.

With regard to (b), the study was prepared by SEPW Architecture Inc. through a specific service agreement with Public Works and Government Services Canada on behalf of AAFC.

With regard to (c), the study was completed December 21, 2012.

With regard to (d), the report detailed options regarding the Agroforestry Development Centre.

AAFC is currently considering options for the agroforestry science and research activities at the Agroforestry Development Centre in the context of future requirements for research in agroforestry at AAFC while ensuring prudent stewardship of public funds.

Question No. 1315—**Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault:**

With regard to the letter sent by Service Canada concerning changes to the Employment Insurance program entitled "Changes to Employment Insurance": (a) how many letters were sent, broken down by (i) province, (ii) date sent; (b) on what date was the decision made to issue this letter; (c) on what date was the final draft of the letter approved by the office of the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development; (d) how much did it cost to write, review and mail out these letters; and (e) how many other mass mailings have been conducted over the past 15 years regarding Employment Insurance and how large were they?

Routine Proceedings

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with regard to the letter entitled “Changes to Employment Insurance” sent by Service Canada concerning changes to the employment insurance program and in regard to (a)(i), in Newfoundland and Labrador, there were 212,572 addressees; in Nova Scotia, 396,159 addressees; in Prince Edward Island, 60,720 addressees; in New Brunswick, 328,564 addressees; and in Quebec, 3,552,488 addressees.

With regard to (a)(ii), a total of 4,550,503 letters were sent. These letters were mailed on March 19, March 20 and March 25, 2013.

With regard to (b), the final decision to move forward with this project was taken on March 7, 2013. An assessment on cost of the mailing and discussions on the letter’s content and design took place prior to a decision being taken.

With regard to (c), the final draft was approved by the minister’s office on March 8, 2013.

With regard to (d), the letter was drafted internally by departmental staff. Therefore, there is no cost associated to the development of the letter. The total cost of mailing out the letters was \$823,493.24 which includes printing and postage costs, excluding taxes.

With regard to (e), it is important that policy changes to our programs be communicated to Canadians as clearly as possible. While no other similar mailings have been conducted in the past six years on employment insurance, there have been mail-outs for other programs. An example is the future change in the age of eligibility for old age security last year. Financial records are only kept by the department for six years. Contracts or procurement conducted prior to the past six years require specific details for archive retrieval such as contractor name, contract number or financial codes.

* * *

• (1530)

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURN

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if Questions Nos. 1314 and 1316 could be made orders for return, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 1314—**Ms. Chris Charlton:**

With regard to the Employment Insurance Stewardship Pilot program: (a) what is the rationale for this program; (b) when was the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development first made aware of this pilot program in any form (concept, draft or final); (c) did this program have Ministerial approval at any stage; (d) if yes to (c), when did the Minister provide approval in any form (concept, draft or final); (e) what is the total cost of this program, including the total cost for all travel for each employee; (f) what is the total number of Full-Time Equivalent employees required for this program; (g) what is the total number of Full-Time Equivalent employees required as investigators for this program; (h) what was the total amount of overtime to date; (i) what is the total number of reviews for Employment Insurance (EI) benefits claims under this pilot program that occurred at the claimants’ residence; (j)

what is the total number of reviews for EI benefits claims under this pilot program broken down by (i) geographic area, (ii) province, (iii) previous employment industry, (iii) any other grouping or criteria used for processing; (k) what is the total number of reviews for EI benefits claims under this pilot program made on the self-employed, broken down by (i) geographic area, (ii) province, (iii) previous employment industry, (iv) any other grouping or criteria used for processing; (l) what is the total number of “last employer or relevant third parties” contacted for verification of reviews for EI benefits claims; (m) what is the total number of on-site visits to employers to view and verify Record of Employment information for reviews for EI benefits claims; (n) who are the members of the Program Stewardship and Analysis team; (o) how many analysis reports did the Program Stewardship and Analysis team produce, including dates and internal unique identifying or tracking numbers for each report; (p) who designed the Detailed Investigative Technique Tool; (q) who approved the Detailed Investigative Technique Tool; (r) what were the phases of approval of the Detailed Investigative Technique Tool; (s) when was the Minister first made aware of the Detailed Investigative Technique Tool in any form (concept, draft or final); (t) who are the members of the EI Stewardship Review (EISR) Working Group; (u) how were the members of the EISR Working Group chosen or appointed; (v) who selected the members of the EISR Working Group; (w) how often did the members of the EISR Working Group meet (include dates and locations for each meeting); (x) what was the total cost of the members of the EISR Working Group (broken down by travel type, accommodations, meals, and other expense categories available); (y) who did the members of the EISR Working Group report to; (z) what are the dates of the conference calls undertaken by the EISR Working Group; (aa) what was the StreetSweeper software date of utilization; (bb) who approved StreetSweeper software for this pilot program; (cc) who were the Business Expertise Consultants listed by region; (dd) as a result of the reviews under this pilot program, how many were finalized as a Case in Order; (ee) as a result of the reviews under this pilot program, how many were finalized as a prepared Report of Investigation for Processing and Payment Services Branch adjudication; (ff) why were the timelines for Planning, Pilot, Finalization of Reviews and Review/Analysis chosen; (gg) why was the March, 2013, deadline chosen for the Finalization of Reviews; (hh) why was the November, 2012, to February 2013, timeline chose for the “pilot” section of this program; (ii) who designed the EI Stewardship Review Survey list of Client Interview review points/questions; (jj) who approved the EI Stewardship Review Survey list of Client Interview review points/questions; (kk) who designed the EI Stewardship Review Survey list of Employer/Third Party review points/questions; (ll) who approved the EI Stewardship Review Survey list of Employer/Third Party review points/questions; (mm) what is the policy and recommended procedure for inspectors regarding entering the residence of a claimant for the purposes of interviewing regarding the review for EI Benefits claims; (nn) what is the policy and recommended procedure of inspectors regarding verifying proof of a child’s identity and parentage for a claimant for the purposes of interviewing regarding the review for EI Benefits claims; (oo) what is the policy and recommended procedure for inspectors regarding verifying proof of hospitalization of a claimant for the purposes of interviewing regarding the review for EI Benefits claims; and (pp) what is the total number of times employer or third party payroll records were observed under this pilot program?

(Return tabled)

Government Orders

Question No. 1316—**Mr. Peter Julian:****GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

With regard to the Nuclear Liability Act and nuclear safety: (a) will the Department of Natural Resources Canada organize a public consultation with a variety of environmental and socio-economic stakeholders on the modernization of the Nuclear Liability Act before revisions are tabled in Parliament; (b) will the Department of Natural Resources Canada (NRCAN) provide the policy objectives of the Nuclear Liability Act; (c) in considering revisions to the Nuclear Liability Act, what criteria is the government currently using to determine the liability of nuclear operators; (d) will NRCAN release all comments provided by industry to its May 2013 consultation document on the Nuclear Liability Act; (e) how does NRCAN define “the limitation, to a reasonable level and in a manner that is consistent with Canada’s international obligations, of the risks to national security, the health and safety of persons and the environment that are associated with the development, production and use of nuclear energy” as laid out in the objectives of the Nuclear Safety and Control Act; (f) has NRCAN or any agency under its authority assessed the potential consequences of a major accidental radiation release at a Canadian nuclear facility; (g) will NRCAN commission a study on the consequences of a large accidental radiation release at the Darlington nuclear station, the Pickering nuclear station, the Point Lepreau nuclear station, and the Bruce nuclear station to inform a public consultation on revising the Nuclear Liability Act and publicly release the results; (h) will NRCAN provide the preliminary conclusions of the Atomic Energy Control Board’s (AECB) severe accident study; (i) will NRCAN provide the AECB’s rationale for abandoning the severe accident study; (j) has NRCAN reviewed the frequency and magnitude of reactor accidents based on the world-wide record as recommended by the Inter-departmental Work Group on the Nuclear Liability Act in 1984, and if so, will NRCAN share the conclusions of this review; (k) has Environment Canada considered the impact of a proposed Nuclear Liability and Compensation Act or the current Nuclear Liability Act on Canada’s commitment to sustainability and the polluter-pays principle, and if so, will Environment Canada provide the results of the department’s analysis; (l) has NRCAN considered the impact of the Nuclear Liability and Compensation Act or the Nuclear Liability Act on Canada’s commitment to sustainability and the polluter-pays principle, and if so, will NRCAN provide the results of the department’s analysis; (m) could NRCAN provide the government policy objective that led to the passage of the Nuclear Liability Act and describe how and when this policy was established; (n) could NRCAN provide the government policy objective that informed the development of the proposed Nuclear Liability and Compensation Act and describe how and when this policy was established; (o) did NRCAN reconsider Canada’s policy on nuclear liability protection following the Fukushima disaster; (p) under which conditions would NRCAN accept an unlimited liability regime for the updated Nuclear Liability and Compensation Act in the event of a nuclear accident, and if none, why not; (q) has NRCAN estimated the implicit subsidy per kilowatt that would be created by raising the liability limit to \$650 million and \$1 billion as opposed to an unlimited liability, and if so, will NRCAN share the results; (r) does NRCAN have a policy on assessing and reporting on the energy market distortions created by the implicit subsidy created by current and future caps on nuclear operator liability; (s) how often does NRCAN verify the insurance capacity of the insurers in Canada; and (t) how does NRCAN define the “reasonable” cost of insurance in determining the maximum level required of nuclear operators?

(Return tabled)

[English]

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

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: I wish to inform the House that because of the deferred recorded divisions, government orders will be extended by seven minutes.

[English]

ECONOMIC ACTION PLAN 2013 ACT, NO. 1

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-60, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 21, 2013 and other measures, as reported (without amendment) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was going to say that I am pleased to rise to speak to Bill C-60, but actually I am disappointed to have to rise to speak to Bill C-60 because of the process that has been used to get the bill before the House and to ram it through.

New Democrats object—

The Deputy Speaker: There is a point of order from the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I desperately hate to interrupt the member for Nanaimo—Cowichan. I hold her in high regard and I apologize.

However, I thought we would have questions to the speaker who ended just before question period. We did not have a question period with the last speaker on behalf of the Conservative Party.

The Deputy Speaker: With the member not being present, we do not go to questions and comments.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Nanaimo—Cowichan.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Mr. Speaker, New Democrats oppose Bill C-60 both with regard to the process and with regard to the content. This is another example. The bill is 115 pages and will make amendments to 49 different pieces of legislation. Of course, a bill of that scope and magnitude deserves thorough examination by members of Parliament.

Because of the time allocation imposed on the bill at both second reading and report stage and because of a very unsatisfactory process when the bill was before committees, the House has not had an opportunity to study the bill in the kind of depth it should be studied.

Part of the concern is that this budget implementation bill would do a number of things. First of all, it would raise taxes on Canadians by introducing tax hikes on credit unions and small businesses in addition to hiking tariffs on thousands of products that were announced in the budget.

It would give Treasury Board sweeping powers to interfere in free collective bargaining and impose employment conditions on non-union employees at crown corporations. It would amalgamate the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade and the Canadian International Development Agency with no reference to the ODA Accountability Act regarding the purpose of aid.

Government Orders

It would amend the Investment Canada Act to dramatically reduce the number of takeovers subject to review and introduce new rules regarding foreign state-owned enterprises. It proposes an inadequate Band-Aid fix for the flawed approach to labour market opinion in the temporary foreign worker program and proposes to increase fees for visitor visas for friends and family coming to visit Canadians. It would push ahead with work on a national securities regulator instead of working consensually with the provinces, and it would remove the residency requirement for committees of directors for financial institutions such as banks and life insurance companies.

People in my riding of Nanaimo—Cowichan pay close attention to pieces of legislation before the House, and I have had a number of concerns raised. One of them that I mentioned was the amalgamation in the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

This is an example of an email sent to me by a constituent. This person said:

I am a constituent in your riding and a concerned citizen who cares about efforts to end global poverty and promote human dignity.

For the past 45 years, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) has supported the work of Canadian organizations involved in international development. Thanks to this collaboration, they have made a tremendous contribution in supporting the efforts of poor communities gain access to education and healthcare, ensuring food security, and promoting human dignity.

We have seen the results of this good work and I want Canada to remain as engaged as I am.

I am asking you to ensure that CIDA's mandate of poverty reduction and promoting human rights remains central, and that sufficient resources will be allocated to fulfill that mandate.

I also want to ensure that the many Canadian organizations, which have an excellent track record in responding to the needs of the poor, will remain key partners of the Government in its actions to end global poverty.

That is just one example of the kinds of concerns that have been raised by my constituents with regard to proposed changes in the bill. That particular amalgamation of CIDA with foreign affairs is an important matter that should have an independent review and not just be rammed through in an omnibus piece of legislation.

Another one, on which I received literally over 1,000 emails, is the CBC. On Vancouver Island, CBC is a much-loved institution. For years, islanders fought for a CBC presence on Vancouver Island. Finally, a number of years ago, we ended up with CBC Victoria. In a recent survey, CBC Victoria was one of the most-listened-to radio stations in the morning. That speaks to the way people see the CBC on Vancouver Island and in my riding.

The bill threatens to make some changes. In this connection I want to refer to a letter of May 23 that was sent to the Prime Minister. It was signed by dozens of people, including academics and so on. They said:

Dear Prime Minister:

We express deep concern about a proposal on pages 108/109 in Bill C-60 that would undermine the arms-length relationship between the CBC, our national public broadcaster, and the federal government.

The Broadcasting Act states that the CBC "shall, in the pursuit of its objects and in the exercise of its powers, enjoy freedom of expression and journalistic, creative and programming independence".

As you know, this statement places the CBC on a par with its counterparts in other free and democratic countries. It is what makes the CBC a public broadcaster - as opposed to a state broadcaster. Independence from governmental interference is the key distinction between the two - throughout the world.

●(1535)

Bill C-60 proposes to amend the Financial Administration Act to permit the government to set the mandate for and audit CBC's collective bargaining as well as give the government a veto over CBC's collective agreements. This means that the government would become the effective employer of CBC's personnel, including its journalists, producers and story editors.

Such powers would intrude into CBC's independence well beyond its employee's compensation. Conditions of work are an integral part of CBC's collective agreements with its various employee groups. Such conditions currently provide assurance of the integrity of CBC as an independent national public broadcaster, as required under the Broadcasting Act.

For example, conditions of work in the CBC's collective agreements ensure that:

Journalists cannot be pulled off assignments without good reason.

Journalists do not have to fear retribution, including loss of employment, as a result of reporting the news.

CBC is required to protect the authority of producers over the content, form and budget of a program.

Producers cannot be removed from a program without justification, and they have the right to refuse to produce a program if they do not agree with its content or form.

Were Bill C-60 to pass without amendment, any government could change such provisions in its own interest—at great cost to Canadian democracy.

The federal government already has more than ample influence over CBC through appointment of its CEO and board of directors, and the allocation of its federal grant.

We therefore urge in the strongest terms that Bill C-60 be amended to remove all references to the CBC.

As I mentioned, that is the full text of the letter that was sent to the Prime Minister on May 23.

The New Democrats did attempt to amend Bill C-60 by putting forward a motion that would have seen the references to CBC carved out of the bill, introduced as a separate bill in the House of Commons and then we would be able to have a full debate on it. Unfortunately, the Conservatives did not agree to those amendments.

As I mentioned, I have received over 1,000 emails on this matter. These are a couple of examples.

One person wrote:

The CBC must be independent from the government. That is why I object to the government taking control of the lion's share of the CBC's budget. The Prime Minister should not have direct control of the salaries and working conditions of CBC journalists and creative staff. I do not want any politician exercising such control over our national public broadcaster. I urge you to abandon this plan.

Another person wrote:

I am writing to object to the proposal to undermine the CBC's editorial independence contained in Budget Implementation Bill C-60. No public broadcaster anywhere in the free world faces the degree of political interference that is proposed for the CBC in Bill C-60. This Bill would give the government the opportunity to turn the CBC into a political propaganda machine rather than a public broadcaster. For the sake of our country and our democracy I urge you to work to have provisions concerning the CBC removed from Bill C-60.

That is just a small sample of the emails that came in.

Government Orders

I also want to touch on another aspect with regard to Bill C-60 and the importance of maintaining that journalistic independence. In a column I wrote recently, I was referencing an organization called Reporters without Borders. It is responsible for issuing the press freedom index.

It indicated that Canada had fallen from 10th to 20th place. This report states that Canada is now behind Costa Rica, Namibia and Lichtenstein. The RWB has blamed the Conservative government's action and incessant attacks on the journalistic principles of anonymous sources for the slip in the ranking.

This is evidence of the kinds of concerns that have been raised by my constituents and thousands of people across Canada.

We have also seen another attack in another bill that is a private member's member before the House, Bill C-461, an act to amend the Access to Information Act and the Privacy Act (disclosure of information), and would put some further restrictions on CBC's abilities to operate independently.

Sadly, with the budget implementation bill, we have seen an effort to shut down parliamentary debate. The efforts to curb CBC's journalistic independence is just another example of the lack of transparency and accountability that the government continues to demonstrate through its various pieces of legislation that it has rammed through the House.

I encourage all members to vote against Bill C-60 and ask the government to bring back a bill and a process that allows us to fully debate such legislation that would have such far-ranging effects.

• (1540)

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague about the changes in tax hikes on credit unions in rural and small town Canada. There are significant challenges faced in regions across Canada, particularly in regions that do not have either mining or energy wealth. We see a demographic trend toward smaller communities, older populations and small businesses.

One thing that has been there for rural and small town Canada, even during these difficult times, is the co-operative movement and credit unions. We are told by the heads of credit unions across Canada that these changes will hurt credit unions significantly.

Does the hon. member agree that these tax hikes on credit unions will reduce capital for small businesses and entrepreneurs in rural and small town Canada and, as such, should be reconsidered and reversed by the government?

Ms. Jean Crowder: Mr. Speaker, in my riding of Nanaimo—Cowichan, there are a number of credit unions. It is an area that has been hard hit at times with changes in the resource industry. For example, in a small town called Youbou, the mill closed down a number of years ago and in Lake Cowichan, a neighbouring small town, found itself at a point where the big banks were closing down their branches.

With regard to the deductions for credit unions, it allowed them to occupy a space where big banks would love to see some of the credit unions close down so they could occupy a monopolistic space in some of the smaller towns. Therefore, it is absolutely essentially that

the support we provide for credit unions stays in place so they can continue to provide the community service.

I know credit unions in Nanaimo—Cowichan are a vital part of the community. They are the ones supporting local activities, local businesses and opening the doors for businesses that might not be able to get loans and support from the larger financial institutions. It is really disappointing to see this in Bill C-60. It is an important way for many of the communities to survive financially.

• (1545)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Nanaimo—Cowichan for her speech.

She focused mainly on the interference of the President of the Treasury Board in the collective agreement negotiations of crown corporations. I fully understand her concern because it is common knowledge that, regrettably, the President of the Treasury Board tends to confuse his personal interests with the public interest. Indeed, he diverts the public interest to serve certain personal interests in a small circle in his riding. This has been obvious in recent years.

One very big problem with this is that it pushes the limits of government interference in collective agreement negotiations. Now it is plausible that this moving line could affect other business activities within crown corporations.

I would like to know whether my colleague shares these concerns and whether she thinks this could go beyond the issue of collective bargaining.

[*English*]

Ms. Jean Crowder: Mr. Speaker, that is a very good question.

We have seen an anti-labour agenda from the Conservative government. It has done it through the back door with private members' bills. Bill C-377 is a really good example of a bill that tried to impose the kinds of reporting requirements on the trade union movement to which other organizations were not subject.

Bill C-60 is another attempt to take a run at crown corporations and the collective bargaining process that is in place. This, again, plays into the government's agenda and people need to be concerned about what is going on.

Our country is a stronger place because of fair and free collective bargaining and we do not want processes that interfere with that.

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Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is indeed my pleasure today to speak to elements of Bill C-60, an act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 21, 2013 and other measures.

I want to talk about some of the things that are so important in this budget, which would really make a difference, especially to my province.

The Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act piece of Bill C-60 is extremely important to Manitoba. As members know, 40¢ on the dollar has come from the federal government basically to keep Manitoba going.

This new legislation would amend part I, part I.1 and part V.1 of the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act. These changes are required to implement the renewal of the equalization and territorial formula financing programs as the minister announced in December of last year at the finance ministers meeting.

New Brunswick and Manitoba would be protected because of this legislation against a year-over-year decline in their total major transfers. It would eliminate provisions that would be no longer required for the administration of the equalization and TFF programs and would clarify the provisions setting out the escalators in TFF and the Canada health transfer. This is extremely important to Manitoba.

In terms of part I, this legislation would extend the authority to make equalization payments to provinces to March 31, 2019, fulfilling the commitment to renew the program for an additional five-year period.

In addition, the legislation sets out payments to New Brunswick and Manitoba that would ensure their total major transfers in 2013-14 would be no lower than what they were in the previous fiscal year. A change would also be made to clarify the alignment of the timing of calculations and the associated payments. The remaining changes would eliminate elements of the legislation no longer required for the administration of the program, including those related to amounts determined for previous fiscal years that expired provisions related to the 2005 offshore arrangements with Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador.

This might seem insignificant to provinces that do not have these challenges. However, for Manitoba, this is very helpful to our province. When I look at Bill C-60, it is indeed an economic action plan that would build our Canada, create more jobs and pay attention to the needs of businesses across Manitoba and our nation.

I want to talk a bit about the Canadian Youth Business Foundation.

This measure in Bill C-60 proposes to provide funding of \$18 million in multi-year support for the Canadian Youth Business Foundation to enable the foundation to continue its support for young entrepreneurs between the ages of 18 and 34. These young entrepreneurs do not need a hand out, they need a hand up, and with the Canadian Youth Business Foundation, that would happen.

The Canadian Youth Business Foundation is a national not-for-profit organization that works with young entrepreneurs to help them become the business leaders of tomorrow. They get mentorship,

expert advice, learning resources and start-up financing. Over the past 10 years, the foundation has worked with 5,600 new entrepreneurs helping to create 22,100 new jobs across Canadian communities, which is very exciting to our economy and the young business people who have their hopes and dreams of building their own futures here in our great nation.

There are many other things that have happened to help youth, and I want to talk about Indspire, which is a measure that also centres on youth.

Bill C-60 would provide \$5 million in 2013-14 to Indspire to provide post-secondary scholarships and bursaries for students who are registered as Indians under the Indian Act and for Inuit students. A further \$5 million for 2014-15 would be provided through the estimates.

● (1550)

Indspire has a proven record of success. It has provided scholarships to over 2,200 aboriginal students annually and has raised significant support from a range of corporate donors to help support student success. With this new investment, Indspire would be able to provide scholarships to thousands more registered first nations and Inuit youth, helping them reach their potential and strengthening aboriginal communities across the country.

What makes Bill C-60, the economic action plan 2013 act, so important is that it goes right to the essence of what Canadians are all about. It talks about needs, as I outlined at the beginning of my speech on Manitoba and the transfer payments. It outlines the need to build youth, not only young entrepreneurs but youth who would be helped in their education with these scholarships.

The economic action plan also looks at another vulnerable community in our country, and that is older people. We will have more senior citizens in two years than we have young people. There needs to be real attention paid to front-line health care providers.

I want to talk about the Pallium Foundation of Canada. This is another very good initiative. This measure proposes to provide \$3 million in multi-year support to the Pallium Foundation of Canada to support training in palliative care for front-line health care providers.

With an aging demographic, when our seniors, who have built this country, come to end-of-life situations, they need to be honoured and cared for. Often they like to be cared for in their homes. The government has committed to helping ensure that Canadians receive the compassionate care they need.

The Pallium Foundation of Canada works to improve the quality of palliative care and end-of-life care for Canadians by creating educational resources for primary care professionals. These primary care professionals are the ones who take care of these very vulnerable populations.

Government Orders

Economic action plan 2013 proposes funding of \$3 million over three years to the Pallium Foundation of Canada to support training in palliative care for front-line health care providers. This investment builds on the funding provided in budget 2011 that is being used to support the initiative called the way forward: moving towards community-integrated palliative care in Canada, which aims to help develop new community-integrated palliative care models across this country.

Having said that, we know that a lot of people are not trained in end-of-life issues. Having this front-line training for these very important front-line health care workers is of paramount importance to the well-being of the elderly person and others who are coming to end-of-life situations and are receiving palliative care. It is also important to their families to put in those supports to help them see their way through this very difficult time.

When we look at all these measures, we are cognizant of the fact that to be able to provide health care and all these things we need, we need research.

I am just starting, and I find that I only have a minute left. I have so many good things to talk about in this particular economic action plan.

I want to finish off with the importance of research. Genome Canada has been given a very big boost since our government came to power. It has provided \$165 million for multi-year support for genomics research through Genome Canada. This research has been very important for health care.

● (1555)

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for her speech on the bill.

I would like to speak to the comment at the tail end of her speech about the importance of research. Although I have the utmost respect for the member, I am a little stunned that she would say that the bill shows support for important research, yet the government killed support to the Experimental Lakes Area, which was once one of its most important investments. It only gave it a couple of million dollars a year. It was not as though it was a huge investment. However, it was a show of support for an internationally acclaimed initiative that helped to develop the standards for controlling mercury from coal-fired power plants, for controlling phosphorous in detergents and for dealing with acid rain.

I am wondering if the member could address the fact that while she claims the government is deeply interested in research, it would turn around and do this and deep-six one of the most important research institutions in the history of this country.

Mrs. Joy Smith: Mr. Speaker, I thank that member, who I too have deep respect for, because I think her heart is definitely in the right place with respect to her constituents.

When I talk about the research, I am talking about the \$165 million in multi-year support for genomics research through Genome Canada.

Having said that, there was another question asked about the Experimental Lakes Area. I know that there is a lot of opportunity

for private entities to also take care of this research and take it over so that it is not shut down. It is expanding and reaching out to offer private entities the opportunity to come in and help with this kind of research.

On the health care aspect, the funding will enable Genome Canada to launch new large-scale research competitions. As I said in my speech, with an aging population, we need more research on cancer care and on a lot of the health care initiatives and challenges we have right now in our country. There will be more of them as we progress. Therefore, it is a matter of making this very important choice of expanding on the research in health care areas that are going to be very important for Canadians.

● (1600)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to continue with health care, because we all know that Canadians see health care as one of those issues that add to our identity. It provides a certain level of comfort in the minds of all of us. We are very proud of the health care system we have in Canada.

There is also a great deal of concern in regard to a health care accord. A health care accord provides long-term security in terms of financing health care. We all recognize that to have a national health care program, we need to provide that commitment in terms of cash resources for the provinces.

I am wondering if the member for Kildonan—St. Paul would provide comment in regard to her thoughts on the financing and leadership role the federal government should play in health care delivery.

Mrs. Joy Smith: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Winnipeg for his very insightful question, because indeed, health care is of paramount importance. We are looking at so many aspects of health care right now through our government, not only in Manitoba but all across our nation.

Looking at the funding, the health care transfer payments have been increased exponentially across our nation this year so that the provinces can make their decisions about actual health care delivery.

Under the auspices of the federal government, we look at several aspects. The accord is one aspect. I know that the Senate has done an in-depth study on the health accord. I know that in committee, we are just about to finish a very good report on technological innovation. We are moving forward in terms of having all partners being part of the health care solution: the patient, the families, everybody.

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to this so-called budget bill. This Conservative omnibus bill goes far beyond any legitimate budget implementation. It contains an entirely new department of foreign affairs act and would amend nearly 50 pieces of legislation. This is the Conservatives third attempt to avoid public scrutiny and proper parliamentary consideration of their proposals.

By tabling such an unwieldy and wide-ranging bill, with such a short timeframe for deliberations, the government is not only trying to deny both Parliament and the public the chance to study the implications of these sweeping changes but is undermining democracy.

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It is interesting to note that the Conservatives claim that this legislation would lead to growth in the Canadian economy. In fact, the Parliamentary Budget Officer estimates that this last year's trifecta of budget bills and fiscal upgrades would lead to a loss of 67,000 jobs. The PBO predicts that the unemployment rate will remain stagnant at over 7%.

In my own city of London, the unemployment rate sits at more than 9%, with little hope of improvement in the near future. Families are suffering. Small and medium businesses are suffering. The community is facing real hardship, and the Conservative government is without any meaningful remedies. We hear a great deal of high talk from the Conservatives, and we certainly see their expensive action plan commercials, but we have not seen any creative or innovative ideas when it comes to economic stimulus and relief for communities such as mine.

Bill C-60 contains nothing to make these economic conditions more manageable for families. There are no job creation measures, yet there are tax hikes on everything from hospital parking to credit unions. Those tax hikes for individuals will cost Canadians over \$8 billion. Additionally, the Conservatives are raising tariffs on over 1,200 goods by \$333 million but are doing nothing to ease record levels of household debt.

The Caledon Institute, in its budget analysis, notes that good jobs have disappeared in Canada. We know that. I am going to quote from the institute report:

The decline of manufacturing has meant the loss in the past 10 years of more than 700,000 better-paying jobs that typically came with decent benefits and pensions. Its demise has contributed to the hollowing out of the middle class not only in Canada but throughout the developed world.

The only government response to problems in the manufacturing sector has been austerity, cuts to programs and belt tightening. Sadly, these austerity measures have not worked. Around the world, austerity has only led to deeper recession, and here in Canada, the unnecessary focus on the deficit has resulted in a sluggish economy.

An article in *The Economist* said that the government's plan, which relies on spending restraint and unusually high revenue growth, is seen by many as wishful thinking.

Carol Goar, writing in the *Toronto Star*, said:

Since he [the Minister of Finance] began chopping programs and expenditures, the economy has drooped, the job market has sagged, consumers have pulled back and the corporate sector has hunkered down, sitting on its earnings. The same formula has delivered worse results in Europe.

The federal government has the opportunity to avoid the disastrous consequences of austerity to jump-start the economy and make a long-term investment in our social, economic and environmental future. Instead, the Conservative budget plan offers a host of proposals that will only weaken families, workers, the environment and seniors.

Seniors are often vulnerable to even the best of economic climates. This legislation would do nothing to address the retirement security of those who face a loss of their savings.

In a previous budget bill, the government made changes to old age security and GIS and raised the age of eligibility for OAS and GIS from 65 to 67. The receipt of GIS and OAS has a critical impact on

poor seniors in this country. By raising the age of eligibility, the government is callously denying those who are struggling at hard, physically demanding jobs and those trying to manage on provincial support programs any hope of a dignified retirement at age 65.

• (1605)

In this budget, Conservatives offer only a vague and unexplained reference to low-cost and secure pension options. Instead of raising the GIS to ensure every senior is lifted out of poverty, or opening up the CPP/QPP to allow seniors to increase their savings, the Conservative budget would implement the kinds of policies that are of no real value to the retirees of this country. The Conservatives' pooled registered pension plan does little to help with pension savings for the vast majority of Canadians.

Although numerous organizations, from the United Nations to Statistics Canada, have released reports emphasizing the need to address affordable housing and poverty issues for seniors, this budget makes no mention of either of those. In point of fact, the Conservative government has absolutely no interest in the lack of affordable housing in Canada, and even less interest in the fact that more than 250,000 seniors live in poverty.

By contrast, the budget bill before us has several measures to improve the government's ability to catch CPP/QPP overpayments and ensure the government is able to recover that money. While the recovery of inappropriate payments is a good thing, we need look no further than the controversy surrounding certain senators. I am concerned that, on the other hand, the government is failing to ensure that Canadians have access to money owed to them. The Social Security Tribunal set up by the government is not only rife with partisan appointments, but many fear the reduced number of tribunal members will make it painfully slow in its decision making, leaving poor people waiting and waiting.

The Conservatives seem to have the attitude that the taxpayers are out to cheat the government, and that must end. I believe that the government should be serving the taxpayer and that our priority should be to ensure that Canadians are receiving the benefits and services they require and have earned. It is a good thing to ensure that overpayments are recovered, but not without ensuring that those who are slipping through the cracks are caught and helped as well.

I would also like to highlight here the pension income splitting that the Conservatives introduced in a previous budget. The Caledon Institute of Social Policy stated:

Government Orders

The Budget also pats itself on the back for the pension income splitting provision, a very expensive (\$920 million) and regressive tax break introduced in 2007 that favours wealthy senior couples. A senior couple with a modest private pension of \$20,000 a year will realize a grand total of \$310 in federal income tax savings as a result of income splitting. For a couple with \$30,000 in pension income, the savings increase to \$802. However, a well-to-do couple with \$100,000 in pension income will see a tax reduction of \$7,280 — more than nine times that of a couple with \$30,000 in pension income, and more than 23 times that of a couple with \$20,000 in private pension income.

And what of single seniors? There are many single women and men who are unable to benefit at all. I would also like to highlight that seniors are still living in poverty in this country. Those particularly affected are single senior women who tend to have significantly less pension savings. We can and should do more for those living out their senior years making the tough choices between housing, food and medication. It is shameful that this budget would do nothing to address the poverty faced by seniors in Canada.

In fact, the priorities of the Conservative government seem out of touch with the priorities of many Canadians. The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives provides a good example of how exactly to remedy the lack of good public policy. It calls on the Conservatives to address poverty in a meaningful way by prioritizing improvements in the incomes of all low-income and middle-income households, better public pensions, higher minimum wages, the widespread adoption of living wage policies; and improving support for the ill, the unemployed, the young and the old.

This is a travesty of a budget. That is the best I can say of it. It borders on neglect for those who need support the most.

As members can see, there is a good deal more to this budget bill than just budget making. It would go far beyond anything that is legitimate, and I have to question it. I have to say that it is deceptive, it lacks transparency and I hope in 2015 Canadians will hold the Conservative government to account.

• (1610)

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in a way, it is not surprising to hear the negativity from the other side when we consider that opposition members go to the States and talk down our economy.

I am very much aware of the fact that the city the member comes from is experiencing one of the highest unemployment rates in history. I would think that the member would be concerned about creating jobs, especially for young people. Yet, Liberals are saying they are going to oppose the budget when it offers all kinds of opportunity for job creation.

I want to quote Mike Holmes with relation to Skills Canada. He stated:

Actually, I'm very satisfied. I mean, to hear the \$47 billion go into infrastructure which, one, we need—we need to fix the bridges, the roads—two, to help the young get into the trades, a \$15,000 per person tax benefit. I mean, this is a move in the right direction. We're going to encourage the young to get into the trades and we have jobs for them to do. In the long run they're all going to be working for many years and the government is going to be receiving tax dollars. This is a win-win.

My question, very simply, is this. Why would opposition members, especially this member from a high unemployment area, continue to work against the very thing our government has been trying to do: encourage youth to get into the skills trades and find meaningful employment?

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Mr. Speaker, you may have noted that when I began my speech, I spoke about talk, talk, talk, with no action. We are not seeing anything that is tangible and real.

Yes, of course, there is unemployment in my town, thanks very much to the lack of action of the government. When Electro-Motive Diesel and Caterpillar threatened workers with a 50% reduction in pensions, wages and benefits, the government sat on its hands. Yes, there is unemployment because the government continues to sit on its hands.

About a month ago, I visited one of the employers in my riding, Great Lakes Copper. It is managing. It does remarkable work and has a very strong workforce of about 300 people. It pays decent wages and provides benefits. However, it told me that the government allows the dumping of cheap copper into the Canadian market. There is no support or help for entities like Great Lakes Copper, and no practical training either. Within that particular manufacturing facility, multiple skills are required, and the government has provided nothing with regard to the multi-skilled levels for companies like Great Lakes Copper. Conservatives can talk, and they do talk, but I want to see some action.

• (1615)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it was just over a year ago when we heard that the Conservative government was going to increase the age of retirement from 65 to 67. The member made reference to poverty and many seniors are in a poverty situation. When one looks at the budget we are talking about today, the fact that there is really—

The Deputy Speaker: On a point of order, the member for Kitchener—Conestoga.

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Mr. Speaker, there is no truth to the concept that this government is increasing the age of retirement. I would ask my colleague to retract that statement.

The Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order. That is obviously a question of debate.

Resuming questions and comments with the member for Winnipeg North.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, if the Conservative member gets in touch with his caucus, he will find out that, in fact, the age is being increased from 65 to 67. Anyone who is 52 years of age and younger is going to feel that impact.

Pensionable incomes are one way that people are able to afford to live after retirement. Does the member find there is anything within this budget that would provide any hope that the government is going to deal with that particular issue?

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Mr. Speaker, indeed the age of eligibility for OAS-GIS has increased to 67. This is extremely difficult for people who do jobs that require hard labour or who are dependent upon provincial programs. The government did not discuss any of that with the provinces or with pension providers.

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The truth is that this country can afford to look after its seniors. The OECD, Bernard Dussault and Kevin Page have made it very clear that the GDP will increase on a par with the number of seniors and we can indeed maintain the age of eligibility at 65.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to speak to the budget bill.

Let me begin by saying that the leadership provided by the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance since 2006, when we formed the government, has drawn world attention. As the parliamentary secretary of foreign affairs, I travel all over the world doing my job. The question I am often asked is, "How did you guys in Canada do it? How did you avoid the serious recession?"

As we know, countries all around the world, in the eurozone and elsewhere, are facing a serious recession. The question we are asked is how we avoided it, considering that our largest neighbour to the south also went through a very serious recession. It was through the strong leadership provided by the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance during these years.

Let me just point out one factor with respect to Governor Mark Carney. Governor Carney provided strong leadership during the period of this recession and has earned worldwide respect, so much so that the Bank of England, a country facing a very serious recession, has hired him to chart its economy through this recession. That is a great honour for Canada and speaks volumes to the leadership that was provided by the Minister of Finance and Governor Carney. I take this opportunity to wish him bon voyage and the best of luck in the U.K.

The world has acknowledged our fiscal leadership despite the NDP's anti-growth and trade agenda. We now see that the Liberal leader is following the same agenda because I think he is now competing with the NDP for more seats in Quebec.

However, that is not what this is about. Let me highlight what this government has done and talk about the good news since we have come in and why the world is so impressed by us.

The first item on our action plan is to return to a balanced budget. I am pleased to say that we are on track to balance the budget by 2015 and 2016. That is quite a considerable achievement.

How did we do that? By reducing wasteful departmental spending, reducing travel costs through the use of technology, continuing to control public service compensation and eliminating tax loopholes that benefit a select few. We are helping businesses succeed and grow in the global market. We are providing tax relief for manufacturers, helping small business expand through the small business fund, increasing the lifetime capital gains exemption and supporting mining exploration.

Let me also say that this government is strongly supporting families and communities. We are supporting families through an enhanced new tax relief for families. We are investing in communities, nearly \$1.9 billion over five years, to create more affordable housing.

We are supporting and honouring our veterans by enhancing the funeral and burial program by simplifying it and by more than

doubling the current funeral services reimbursement rate from \$3,000 to \$7,000.

We are promoting strong aboriginal communities by strengthening opportunities for on-reserve economic development, improving safety for aboriginal peoples and enhancing health care services on reserves.

Not only that, our economic action plan would also be connecting Canadians with available jobs. In my riding of Calgary East, people are looking for jobs so that they can provide for their children and growing families. This government is providing more job opportunities for people through the Canada skills grant. We are also strengthening the apprenticeship program, and supporting job opportunities by providing tools to persons with disabilities, youth, aboriginals and recent immigrants to help them find a job.

As well, we are investing in a long-term infrastructure plan, with over \$70 billion over 10 years for a new building Canada plan, including \$32.2 billion over 10 years for a community improvement fund, \$14 billion for a new building Canada fund, \$1.25 billion for the renewal of the P3 Canada program, and \$6 billion under current infrastructure programs for provinces, territories and municipalities.

We are continuing to invest in world-class research and innovation. I am pleased to say that I have taken many trips with the Governor General, who has been promoting education links around the world. We have seen, first class, what Canada can offer to other countries, in research and innovation.

• (1620)

It is very important we have a strong health care system and social security network. I am happy to say that there have been record transfer supports for social and health services for my province of Alberta and it will receive significant support through the federal transfers in 2013-14.

Let me also talk for a minute about supporting seniors. Seniors have spent their lives building our country. Therefore, it is natural that we do support them. Since 2006, over \$2.7 billion in annual tax relief has been provided to seniors and pensioners.

Not only that, we are very happy to say that we have expanded tax relief for home care services. We are better protecting seniors using financial services, by working with the banks. We are supporting palliative care services provided by the Pallium Foundation of Canada. We are encouraging a timely implementation of the pooled registered pension plan. We are assisting in construction and renovation of accessible community facilities.

All of this is part and parcel of plan 2013, a plan that will provide hope, direction and guidance so we have a very strong foundation left in our country that will help propel us into the future. In talking about the future, we have to look past it.

Government Orders

The only problem we now have with the NDP, and now these days with the Liberal Party, is they do not look beyond their noses. All they are looking at is when they are getting the next election. That is why the NDP members are opposed to the free trade agreement agenda. Every time we have a free trade agreement, the NDP opposes it. I have sat in this Parliament and time after time I have heard the NDP say that it does not want free trade agreements.

Not only that, in the famous words used by the Leader of the Opposition on growth, it is a disease.

All of this indicates quite clearly why the NDP's economic policies will take us nowhere. A prime example is what happened in British Columbia. The NDP lost the election in British Columbia because the people there got very scared of the economic agenda of the NDP.

We now see that the Liberal Party is not only doing that, but is pitting one region against the other. The leader comes from Quebec, but he seems to forget all the time that he is also the leader of the Liberal Party. All we hear from him, constantly, out west is about the interests of Quebec.

I can understand because he wants to grab a few more seats from the NDP and de-throne it as the official opposition. I wish them good luck. We do not really care, if they remain on the other side of the bench, who the official opposition is. For us, this party is the same party when it comes to the economic agenda.

This government will remain focused on the economic agenda. This government will look to the future so our children have a bright future and will see a strong Canada, economically, socially and for all other things.

Let us move forward. This government is providing the direction.

• (1625)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs for his speech, but I cannot say that I agree with what he had to say.

If we are going to talk about employment rates and economic growth, I would like to tell the House that I had a chance to talk about the 2013 federal budget with the people of my riding in Laval in April. I wanted to tell them about what was in the federal budget, both good and bad. I asked them what they thought of this budget. They talked to me primarily about their concerns, and at the top of the list was the elimination of the tax credit for labour-sponsored funds.

My colleague across the aisle talked about how important employment, economic growth and prosperity are. Quebecers really liked investing in our local economy using that tool. However, the Conservatives are pulling the rug out from under us, since over 85% of these labour-sponsored funds come from the province of Quebec.

Would my colleague opposite not agree that this budget measure is a direct attack on Quebec's economy?

[*English*]

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Mr. Speaker, absolutely not. I do not agree with the member's assessment of labour sponsored funds in Quebec. This budget would help all of Canada, from coast to coast to coast, and would create the economic environment that provides economic benefits for Quebec as well.

With this legislation, there would be a tax break for new manufacturing machinery and equipment that would benefit Quebec. The reduction in GST benefits Quebec. The Canada job grant benefits Quebec very much. The Canada opportunities for apprentices benefits Quebec very much. Supporting more internships for post-secondary graduates benefits Quebec very much.

To say that Quebec will not benefit is absolutely wrong. Rather we are looking forward to having a very strong Quebec within Canada.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to join in the debate on Bill C-60, the budget implementation act.

I would think that anybody who speaks to me about CPAC, the House of Commons and watches the proceedings outside of question period are usually pretty dialed in to the issues facing the nation. They have a great interest in the issues of the nation and there could not be one any more important than the budget implementation act.

My good friend and colleague has been here for the last 13 years so he should be able to answer this question on the budget.

The budget did not have a lot of numbers in it and my good friend's speech was not really overwhelmed with a lot of numbers either. However, could the member tell us, and the people watching at home would really like to know, what the country's accrued debt now stands at? How much debt is our country currently carrying? Just the number would be fine.

• (1630)

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Mr. Speaker, my friend asks a good question. I always look to him to provide some colourful language and questions.

I am very happy that he has asked such a question, for which I must give him credit, but I will have to get back to him with that answer.

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to debate Bill C-60, the budget implementation act. In answer to the previous question, the parliamentary secretary should know that the debt has increased. Again, we are seeing a further addition to that total debt through this budget.

It is interesting that when the Minister of Finance gave his budget speech, he committed to balancing the books by 2015. Well is that not wonderful? The only problem with what the minister said was he has never hit one single target he has ever set, when he was minister of finance with the province of Ontario or when he was Minister of Finance with the federal government.

Government Orders

In fact, the government came to power when there was an annual surplus. Conservatives squandered that away. Now, so the parliamentary secretary understand because he is part of the cabinet, we have a government that is the biggest spending government in Canadian history. It has cut more services and programs than any other government in Canadian history. It is still in deficit spending.

My colleague, the member for Kings—Hants, in his remarks pointed out that there were a number of areas in the bill that we could support, but there were a number of areas that we could not. I have said in this place before that one of the problems is that for some of those technical areas we cannot really get into a discussion and debate on because they are all tied up in the omnibus bill. This one is not as bad as previous ones in covering so many topics, but it still is bad and takes away the ability to really debate in-depth and hold proper hearings on specific sections that are affected by Bill C-60.

My colleague from Kings—Hants indicated that there were two key reasons that we would continue to oppose the bill. One is the legislation threatens the independence of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. In the section in Bill C-60 that talks about crown corporations, Treasury Board collective bargaining, it would allow the cabinet to require that a crown corporation have its negotiating mandate approved by the Treasury Board before beginning negotiations.

It would also allow cabinet to require that a Treasury Board employee attend and act as an observer during that collective bargaining process. In other words, the real ability of a crown corporation to operate in its own right would be taken away by Treasury Board. That is just pure wrong.

We know the dislike that the Prime Minister, the cabinet and government has against the CBC. They are basically going to have the mandate to order the crown corporation, which is supposed to be independent of government, on how it should negotiate. This really undermines that independence in a very serious way.

The second area my colleague from Kings—Hants mentioned, which I agree with, and as our leader has said many times in this place, was the budget continued to raise taxes on middle-class Canadians to pay for the Conservatives' wasteful spending. That is so evident.

● (1635)

It is interesting that when the Minister of Finance got up and read his budget speech and talked a bit about the budget, he outlined the tax relief on hockey equipment, et cetera. What he failed to talk about were all the areas where there would be really, in effect, tax increases or cost recovery fee increases and other measures that would place a financial burden on middle-class Canadians. It is middle-class Canadians who make our country tick. What we see in the budget are a number of tax measures that are really making it much more difficult for Canadian middle-class families to make ends meet.

It is not just the tax measures. The government members get up and say that by our not wanting to increase the tariffs on China, we are putting a damper on creating jobs in Canada. That is not true at all. The fact of the matter is that none of the low-end bicycles are produced in Canada. The higher end, the \$5,000 and \$6,000

bicycles, are, in fact, produced here. It goes to show how narrow the focus of the government is. It tries to paint everything with the same brush. As a result, ordinary Canadians are facing increased costs and certainly a lot fewer services.

The budget also raises taxes on small business owners by some \$2.3 billion over the next five years, directly hurting about three-quarters of a million Canadians and risking Canadian jobs. That is what the budget actually does. Employment insurance premiums will go up. There is a huge cost to Canadians.

In Bill C-60 there was an opportunity for the government to show some vision for the future. Where that vision really needs to be shown is in the whole area of youth employment. That is an absolute missing factor in this particular budget. Canada's labour market for young Canadians has yet to recover from the recession. Unemployment for young people is around 24%. Young people need the opportunity to have a job to help pay for their education but also to give them skills in the employment field and in the business market. Youth employment has been completely ignored by the government. It had an opportunity to do something about Canada's future, but it is failing dismally.

In fact, as has been said in the House a few times, there have been ads during the Stanley Cup playoffs hockey series about Canada's action plan. The government spends on Canada's action plan ads and talks about the student program, but there are a lot of disclaimers at the end of the commercial. It talks about it, but consultations with the provinces on that program have not even started. It is not up and running, and here is the government spending on ads, when the cost for one of those ads, under the current assistance for student work, is equivalent to 32 student summer jobs, in terms of the federal government share. Every time Canadians look at those ads, they must think that there is money that could have been spent more appropriately creating student summer jobs. That is what really needs to be done, and the government failed dismally in that area.

The government will talk about the incentive for greater charitable donations for young people. However, unless it is a family of wealth, and that is not the middle class, that is not going to make any difference either.

● (1640)

To close, this budget is terrible for Prince Edward Island. In my province, the cuts to the Canadian Tourism Commission mean stopping its advertising in the United States market. That means fewer tours coming to Prince Edward Island to help our economy.

There would be cuts to agriculture. That would hurt us in Prince Edward Island. There would be cuts to the fishery, which would hurt us as well.

This is a dismal budget, and the government should just admit it.

The Speaker: Before moving on to questions and comments, 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: the hon. member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, Employment Insurance; the hon. member for Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Science and Technology.

Government Orders

Questions and comments.

The hon. member for Kitchener—Conestoga.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was a little surprised to hear the negativity from the member. I was not surprised to hear it from the NDP, but I thought this member would actually understand that within this budget, there are all kinds of measures to have job creation opportunities for youth. Over and over again, they are ignoring the facts of the budget.

I just want to quote, again, for the benefit of this member and those who may be watching, Mike Holmes. We all know Mike Holmes and the way he promotes job creation and the renovations he does. This is what he said:

Actually very satisfied, I mean, to hear the \$47 billion go into infrastructure, which, one, we need—we need to fix the bridges, the roads—two, to help the young get into the trades, a \$15,000-per-person tax benefit. I mean, this is a move in the right direction. We're going to encourage the young to get into the trades, and we have jobs for them to do. In the long run, they're all going to be working for many years, and the government's going to be receiving tax dollars. This is a win-win.

In Prince Edward Island, Ontario, Manitoba, wherever, this is going to be good for youth. Why would this member from Prince Edward Island not support our youth?

Hon. Wayne Easter: Mr. Speaker, that is why I am on my feet. It is because I do support our youth. The problem is that the budget does not.

Maybe the members are just looking at the talking points. Take, for instance, the \$47 billion in infrastructure. Does that number not sound good on the surface? However, it is stretched out over 10 years. It is back-loaded on the other end, well after the next election. For the next two years, there is hardly anything in that budget for infrastructure.

The member can get up to talk about the \$47 billion. The problem is that the \$47 billion does not exist for that age group that is now youth. By the time that money is available to be spent, they will be well beyond being youth.

That is the problem with the current government. It talks a good line, but it fails to put in the measures to actually do the job. That is the problem with this budget.

• (1645)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Malpeque for his speech. I had the pleasure of working with him on the Standing Committee on International Trade.

He was right when he said that the infrastructure money for all of Canada is peanuts—peanuts in the shell, actually. Stakeholders who want to apply for program funding for their projects will have a lot of work to do.

I would like him to comment on another issue that I am quite concerned about, an issue that we discussed at length at the Standing Committee on Finance. I would like to tell the member for Malpeque how frustrated we felt when the Liberal Party representative supported the government on this issue.

The proposed changes to the Investment Canada Act will raise the threshold so high that, a few years from now, only those transactions worth over \$1 billion—which is very few of them—will be reviewed. It will also depend on what the minister wants, of course.

How can he support that when he talks about fighting for jobs and the future of our youth? Is he not ashamed?

[*English*]

Hon. Wayne Easter: Mr. Speaker, in terms of the Investment Canada Act, the reason we did not support the motion coming forward from the NDP was that it would not allow the necessary investments. We are in 2013. The figures from 10, 15 and 20 years ago, in terms of global investment, just do not work anymore. There are other measures we can take to ensure that the investment coming in, whether it is from foreign countries or state-owned enterprises, meets the requirements we believe are necessary in Canada to protect our natural resources and our value-added industries for Canadians.

We live in a global economy. In fact, I was at a trade session this morning where we were talking about the necessary investment to utilize the best aspects of our natural resource industry.

Ms. Eve Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, economic action plan 2013 is our Conservative government's plan for jobs, growth and long-term prosperity. Our economic action plan is centred on the priorities of hard-working Canadians and their families. We remain focused on what matters to Canadians. This government knows that Canadians are concerned about the economic prosperity of this nation. They want to know that we have a solid plan of action to ensure that Canada continues to prosper. I am proud to say that our government continues to put Canadians first.

Ongoing economic turbulence in the United States and Europe, among our most important trading partners, continues to impact Canada. That is why our government introduced economic action plan 2013 to help protect and grow the Canadian economy with positive measures like the hiring credit for small businesses; the Canada job grant, the largest federal investment in job-creating infrastructure projects in Canadian history; and significant new investments to support manufacturing.

In order for Canada to grow, we need more businesses and more investment in our economy. We need more support for job-creating measures. We just posted the strongest quarter in two years, and with the over 900,000 net new jobs that have been created since the depth of the global recession, we have many encouraging signs that Canada's economy is back on track. Our government is ensuring that Canadians get first crack at available jobs by reforming the temporary foreign worker program. Canada's job growth record remains the best among all G7 countries. Our economic stewardship is second to none in the G7.

Government Orders

Small businesses are one of the economic engines of the Canadian economy, accounting for 98% of all employer businesses and supporting workers and communities from coast to coast. My parents, new immigrants to Canada, saved their money and became small business owners. I pumped gas at their gas stations, managed the payroll and inventory orders at their restaurants, and negotiated their land development deals, as my parents' language skills were lacking. To this day, my mom still does not speak English very well, but her work as a small business owner meant that our payroll was always met and our success meant jobs for our neighbours. Small business owners are willing to invest their savings, work hard and take risks to create jobs. In order to maintain Canada's record of job growth, we need to continue to support our businesses, which are our job creators.

Economic action plan 2013 proposes a number of key measures to support small businesses, including extending the temporary hiring credit for small businesses for one year. Approximately 560,000 small business owners would benefit from this measure, allowing them to reinvest approximately \$225 million in 2013, as long as they hire more people. We would also increase the lifetime capital gains exemption to \$800,000 from \$750,000 in 2014, and index it, going forward. The lifetime capital gains exemption increases the rewards of investing in small businesses, and makes it easier for owners to transfer their family businesses to the next generation of Canadian entrepreneurs.

Under our government's low tax plan for Canada, a typical small business owner with a taxable income of \$500,000 has seen his or her tax bill drop by over 34%, or \$28,000, since we were first elected in 2006. Our government clearly values the contribution of small businesses to the success of the Canadian economy. We will continue to support and encourage growth in this vitally important sector.

Economic action plan 2013 would provide \$18 million to the Canadian Youth Business Foundation to help young entrepreneurs grow their firms. Our government has also lowered the small business tax rate from 12% to 11%, allowing small businesses to invest in growth, to hire new employees, our neighbours, and expand in new markets.

• (1650)

We are also extending the temporary accelerated capital cost allowance for new investments in machinery and equipment by Canadian manufacturers for two years.

Conservatives also understand the role of infrastructure in our country's economy. We have invested in an unprecedented number of projects that are improving the GTA's roads, highways and public transit. My neighbours in Mississauga and Brampton rely on public transit and highways on a daily basis. Whether it is commuting to and from work or simply driving our kids to hockey practice, road conditions matter. Improvements to infrastructure and public transit systems throughout Canada will not only preserve more jobs but will also allow for an improved quality of life for commuters.

During the depth of the recession, our government invested in important infrastructure projects. In Mississauga, those vital dollars allowed us to build Sheridan College, a new downtown centre and undertake the largest transit expansion in our city's history. Funding

allowed us to fix up our parks and build new community pools. It put our neighbours to work.

Economic action plan 2013 builds on our investments in infrastructure and announces a new building Canada plan, the largest investment in job-creating infrastructure in Canadian history. The new building Canada plan outlines our investments in our nation.

The community improvement fund would provide \$32.2 billion, consisting of an indexed gas tax fund and an increased GST rebate for municipalities to build roads, public transit, recreational facilities and other community infrastructure across Canada that would improve the quality of life of all Canadians.

In 2008, we made the gas tax fund permanent to help municipalities plan and fund improvements to essential infrastructure. Economic action plan 2013 commits that the gas tax fund be indexed at 2% per year starting in 2014-15.

The new building Canada fund would allocate \$14 billion for major economic infrastructure projects that have both a national and regional significance, bringing back the focus to our communities.

Our government understands the needs of Canadian taxpayers. We understand that Canadians want to save their money and invest in their future. That is why we have introduced measures like the tax-free savings account, TFSA, which allows Canadians to earn tax-free investment income to more easily meet their lifetime savings needs. As of 2013, Canadians can contribute up to \$5,500 annually to a TFSA. This is an increase from the annual contribution limit for 2009 and reflects indexation to inflation. This year the TFSA allows for contributions of up to \$25,500, promoting savings.

We have removed one million low-income families from the tax rolls altogether.

We have targeted personal income tax rates and cut the lowest personal income tax rate to 15%.

Our government appreciates the ongoing contributions of seniors; now it is time for us to show our appreciation. Our government has provided seniors with the very much needed ability to split their pension income.

The average Canadian family of four meanwhile has seen savings totalling more than \$3,200.

Our Conservative government continues to provide the 6% increase to provinces for health care funding all the while.

Since 2006, we have introduced more than 150 tax-cutting measures and provided over \$160 million in tax relief for Canadian families and individuals over a six-year period.

Government Orders

I would like to speak briefly about our veterans, an issue very near and dear to me. Our veterans fought for the preservation of our nation and the safety and freedom of our country.

Our government is committed to ensuring that those who die without financial means receive the necessary financial support to provide for a dignified funeral and burial. The funeral and burial program, which is delivered by the Last Post Fund on behalf of Veterans Affairs Canada, offers financial assistance to veterans' estates where the veteran died as a result of a service-related disability or for cases where the veteran had insufficient assets. This budget commits over \$65 million over two years to more than double the amount of money available for veterans' funerals.

• (1655)

Our government's plan to get back to a balanced budget is working and we have reduced the deficit by more than half over the past two years. Economic action plan 2013 builds on past efforts to reduce government spending by announcing an additional \$1.7 billion of additional savings.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member spoke of support for seniors and families, and so forth. We have been hearing from delegations of medical practitioners for the last couple of weeks who are very concerned about the lack of support by the government to the issues they see arising. To their credit, they have been travelling across Canada talking about the social determinants of health. Very clearly, they are concerned. What the evidence is showing is that the poor are very unhealthy and those with resources are much healthier.

Could the member speak to the call by the Canadian Federation of Municipalities to finally have the government dedicate specific funds for affordable housing, which would help many who are suffering financially and torn between paying for their rent, medicine or food for their children?

Ms. Eve Adams: In fact, Mr. Speaker, as a former regional councillor, I was honoured to invest some much-needed federal dollars in social housing in the region of Peel, including Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon. They were critically important dollars.

Our government is also supporting seniors by allowing for pension income splitting. This is critically important to many couples. More to the point, our government has removed altogether from the tax rolls over one million individuals, the most needy members of our society, including seniors and low-income families. I think the member opposite will agree that is vitally important.

• (1700)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, could the member comment on how she would justify the government hitting new records in terms of expenditures on advertising? The government spends a great deal of tax dollars in order to tell Canadians about an economic action plan. In fact, the current government, more than any other government before it, has allocated hundreds of millions of dollars in self-promotion, on things such as the action plan. The cost of one ad during an NHL hockey game would finance summer jobs for 30 youth.

How does she justify the government, given today's economic times and the call for responsible government spending, wasting so

much money on advertising? People do not want to see the economic action plan ads any more and, for whatever reason, that is not sinking in with the government.

Ms. Eve Adams: Mr. Speaker, in fact, our Conservative government's spending on advertising is lower than the last Liberal government's spending. We are very good stewards of taxpayer dollars.

It is important to communicate with residents across the country. People want to know about the tax credits that are available to them and the job hiring grants. Many parents want to know about the fitness tax credit, for instance, and we need to communicate with Canadians to let them know about the money that is available to them. It is their tax dollars.

Also, everyone will note that it was our government that undertook the reforms to MPs' pensions. We are very serious when we say that we respect taxpayer dollars and our ministers' office spending is lower than what the Liberals spent.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, in line with the last point to the parliamentary secretary, I was recently reviewing the costs of the operations of the Prime Minister's Office, which is the least accountable part of this entire federal budget. It is now almost double what it was at any time in our history. It is now at about \$10 million a year. In an effort to find out how many people work there, I was told that it was off limits for Canadians to know what the \$10 million in the Prime Minister's partisan operations of exempt staff in the PMO actually is spent on.

I wonder if the hon. parliamentary secretary could offer us any guidance as to how we could get some accountability out of that rogue branch of government.

Ms. Eve Adams: Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak to economic action plan 2013, which is our government's plan for jobs, growth and long-term prosperity.

Ensuring that we respect taxpayer dollars is vitally important to our government in just about every measure we have brought forward. Ensuring that the average family of four sees annually savings of \$3,200 and allowing seniors to split their pension income shows that we are clearly committed and on the side of Canadians at the end of the day.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-60. I wish that I had more than 10 minutes, because there is so much to say about this bill.

We were not given nearly enough time at the Standing Committee on Finance. I would therefore like to take this opportunity to waste a few seconds of my precious time to express my opposition to the government's 39th gag order and the fact that the Standing Committee on Finance's study of this bill was a sham.

Government Orders

The committee was responsible for studying Bill C-60. As everyone no doubt remembers, we suggested splitting up the bill in the interest of serving Canadians well. We wanted each committee to have an opportunity to consider relevant parts of the bill, to study them fully, seriously and in depth, instead of looking at the mishmash of measures in this omnibus bill over what amounted to barely two and a half meetings. The committee did its clause-by-clause reading, then wrapped it all up in the blink of an eye with almost total disregard for the witnesses and the integrity of the committee process. It is truly appalling.

I would like to get right to the point and focus on changes to the Investment Canada Act. I have chosen to discuss this aspect as a reminder that, in my riding of Beauport—Limoilou, White Birch Paper's Stadacona mill met with what I would call a tragic fate. I have brought this subject up several times already.

In 2003, when an American investor—more specifically, an unscrupulous investor from New York—bought the Quebec City mill, it employed 1,600 people. At this time, after a nasty lockout and numerous measures to defraud pensioners and workers, only a little over 200 people remained employed at that mill. The mill is operating at well below half of its capacity.

I would like to go into a bit of the history of what happened before the 2011 election. When the lockout was imposed, over 600 employees were working there. Given their working conditions, the work was spread over three shifts and was done around the clock. The order book was full.

This Quebec City industrial gem was altered completely. It was virtually abandoned and left with an uncertain future. It is hard to imagine that this mill could be revived anytime soon, especially since the transaction whereby White Birch Paper was sold to Black Diamond Capital is linked to one of the shareholders, namely, the son of the former owner. That kind of absolutely unbelievable manoeuvring revealed the flaws in the Investment Canada Act.

I mentioned the unfortunate complicity on the part of my Liberal colleagues who agreed, under absolutely false pretenses, to drastically raise the review thresholds for foreign investments. That threshold will now be \$1 billion. For the minister involved, this will be something quite extraordinary in the course of a year, something that will be worth mentioning, given the number of transactions of that size that we are likely to see.

Meanwhile, any number of highway robbers, thieves and fraudsters can freely and openly engage in unfair competition with honest investors and real entrepreneurs who care about developing businesses, taking on missions, diving into a great business adventure and taking positive initiatives, as well as providing opportunities for workers and our young people. It is truly appalling.

• (1705)

Unfortunately, we know that Bill C-60 will pass, barring some unforeseen incident. We can always hope. In the event that a number of government members are regrettably absent, we will gladly vote down their bill.

I would like to talk about the Investment Canada Act and, more specifically, about expanding the criteria. The Minister of Industry

will have very few reasons to review transactions in Canada, and that represents a threat to the Canadian economy.

I was on the Standing Committee on International Trade for one year. I have no problem welcoming foreign investors with open arms. However, we cannot be naive. We need to take at least a few precautions when a so-called investor tries to acquire a Canadian business. It is no different from when a business owner or our financial institutions—our banks—make enquiries about consumers who make significant transactions. That is not unusual; it makes sense.

It is common for a credit check to be conducted when someone is buying a house or car or signing a lease.

How can the government be so lenient when it comes to entire sectors of our economy? Millions of Canadians suffer, directly or indirectly. They suffer directly because the company cuts operations and business is threatened. They suffer indirectly because when working conditions worsen and businesses become filled with cheap labour, they take on other forms, creating unfair competition for business owners who play by the rules and actively participate in Canada's development. A huge number of people are affected.

The erosion of our industrial fabric, our economic fabric and our social fabric is a liability and a disturbing legacy to leave for future generations, particularly since the government is moving forward at top speed. It is absolutely incredible.

Unfortunately, another part of this pseudo-investment is the decision to terminate the pension fund for current and retired employees of the Stadacona mill of White Birch Paper. There will be new developments on that front in the coming days. I continue to watch it all very closely.

Providing our workers and retirees with much less attractive retirement benefits will also undermine the sustainability of our economy to a certain extent. The reality is that having a large number of retirees is also a stabilizing factor in turbulent economic times. We have seen that in the Quebec City area.

I could have talked about the elimination of the tax credit for labour-sponsored funds, which is not in Bill C-60, but is another bad measure. I could also have talked about the creation of private pension funds that, unfortunately, will make workers shoulder the entire responsibility by making employer contributions optional. This will also make it much more difficult to save for retirement.

I am pleased to have spoken out against the type of measures adopted. There is no need to worry that all we are going to do is complain. We are laying the groundwork for our future and for taking power and correcting this situation.

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• (1710)

[English]

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to touch on the foreign takeover aspect. We know that for years, and I have been here since 2004, New Democrats have been calling for greater clarity in foreign investment guidelines. We have seen thousands of acquisitions for which the kinds of oversight and guidelines that should have been required were not in place.

The Conservative government committed to consult Canadians and stakeholders on any more changes to the act, but there is a concern that the coming into force of these multiple new amendments will be determined through regulations.

I wonder if the member could comment on the fact that there has been no thorough public consultation on these changes and that the government did not move forward to do that consultation before it made substantive amendments to the foreign investment guidelines. As well, what would he like to see in terms of a consultation process?

[Translation]

Mr. Raymond Côté: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her question.

I will start by talking about something that happened at the beginning of the year. At a reception held at the Port of Québec in January, I had an opportunity to speak to people from the business community. One of them said something that I found especially intriguing. The individual said that the business community was looking for some recognition. I thought it was significant that after seven years in power the Conservative government had not been able to do that.

Our proposed measures would clarify the rules of the game and introduce fairness.

We are in the midst of the hockey playoffs. If we were to get rid of the rules and allow high-sticking and other infractions, the game might be more exciting, but the resulting brutality would be totally unacceptable to society. That is where we are headed with the new Investment Canada rules.

• (1715)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to pick up on a different but very important issue. It is related to housing.

For many Canadians from coast to coast to coast, housing is a very real issue. For middle-class and other Canadians, the issue is the affordability of a house, because the cost of housing has gone up. There are also individuals, particularly seniors on fixed incomes as well as others, who want to have work done on their homes.

Whether it is residential rehabilitation assistance programs, programs that we have seen in the past need to be enhanced or looked into at the very least, or the expansion of housing co-ops and the potential that housing co-ops have, thinking outside of the box and reinforcing good solid programs seems to have been lacking over the last couple of years in terms of investing in some sort of a national housing strategy to deal with Canada's housing situation.

I wonder if the member could comment on that issue and on how we have heard nary a word mentioned in the last couple of budgets on that very important issue.

[Translation]

Mr. Raymond Côté: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Winnipeg North for his question. This gives me a chance to remind the House that the government rejected our housing strategy.

It also allows me to share a memory that is truly very pleasant, and that is my first nomination as an NDP candidate in 2005. It was a few days, a few hours even, before my late leader, Jack Layton, reached an agreement with the Paul Martin government to cancel \$3 billion in corporate tax cut and adopt measures for housing, among other things.

It is funny because that was my introduction to active politics and the three electoral campaigns I ran before being elected.

Housing has been a priority of ours for a long time. I want to thank my colleague from Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot for fighting for this cause. We will continue to hold up our end; that is certain.

[English]

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak in favour of economic action plan 2013 and our government's budget implementation bill.

Even in the face of this global downturn, under the leadership of the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance, Canada has led the world. Our net debt to GDP ratio is the lowest in the world. All the major credit agencies have affirmed Canada's Triple-A credit rating, and we have enjoyed the strongest job creation record in the G7. Canada has created more than 950,000 net new jobs since 2009, and 90% of those were full time and 80% in the private sector.

Through our government's leadership and discipline, our fiscal program played a strong role in ensuring that Canada's economy stayed on the rails, moving forward. In fact, to quote an editorial from my local paper, the *Waterloo Region Record*:

Canada is doing better and should continue to do better than most other advanced industrial nations, thanks, in part, to the fiscal prudence...

—of the finance minister's budget.

Canada will continue to lead the world because the Canadian government has made the tough, responsible choices. It has made the choice to engage Canadians in a massive temporary stimulus program that kept our economy afloat and built world-class research and commercialization facilities and much-needed community assets and infrastructure: roads, bridges, water treatment facilities and community centres. It has made the choice to maintain our commitment to lowering taxes on individuals and businesses that ensures Canada is an excellent place to call home, to work, to build a business and to raise a family.

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It is worth remembering that the average family of four is paying \$3,200 less, thanks to our tax cuts. Our choice to remain on track for balancing the budget in fiscal 2015-16 is a statement of confidence, confidence in our businesses and workers that, as global markets recover, our entrepreneurs and highly skilled workforce will seize that opportunity, confidence that the prudence we practice today will earn our prosperity for years to come.

Canadians can be confident, confident in themselves, confident in this budget and confident in this government.

I want to focus, though, on the elements of budget 2013 that are most important to my home area of Waterloo Region. For those hon. members unfamiliar with the Waterloo Region, our community has a history of reinventing our economy to adapt with changing times. Our ability to reinvent ourselves has always hinged on our uniquely strong sense of community.

When there is an opportunity to be pursued, business, academia, government, labour and the community sector all work together to make it happen. The people of Waterloo Region do not look for handouts, but they welcome collaboration and support.

That is why I stand today in this House and state categorically that this budget presents great news for my riding of Kitchener—Conestoga and for all of Waterloo Region. Our region is one of the hardest hit by the shortage of skilled workers, from engineers to welders, which our government continues to address. Our government is committed to providing leadership in correcting this. We will support the use of apprentices in federally funded projects and long-term infrastructure programs. We will work in collaboration with the provinces and territories to standardize requirements for apprentices in the skilled trades.

We are expanding opportunities for new entrants to the job market to get the skills they need, and we are increasing supports for Canadians with disabilities. Also, we committed to the Canada job grant, which would provide funds to help Canadians get the skills they need for the in-demand jobs. One hundred and thirty thousand Canadians would be able to take advantage of this program each year, and the direct involvement of employers would ensure the training offered aligns with the skills Canadians need.

The Canadian Chamber of Commerce called Canada's economic action plan 2013, "a significant step forward in the federal government's attack on Canada's skills challenge".

However, it was not only business organizations offering praise. The Association of Canadian Community Colleges, the Canadian Building Trades and Engineers Canada all spoke highly of our approach to building the talent Canada needs, where it needs it.

Dr. John Tibbits, president of Conestoga College, noted that:

This budget clearly recognizes the important role that applied learning plays as a catalyst for job opportunity and innovation that will reinvigorate Canada's economy and put us on the path to a brighter future.

Even the Canadian Labour Congress called our plans around apprenticeships

"...a good first step in creating opportunities."

It is not just a shortage of talent that is holding us back. Our high-tech industry faces a severe lack of venture capital.

● (1720)

High-potential companies in my riding, like Miovision Technologies and Clearpath Robotics, have shared the difficulties small companies face in finding the investment needed to take them to that next level. We live in a global economy and there is a very healthy entrepreneurial culture south of the border, and entrepreneurs there are very willing to purchase promising small enterprises. Too often they require that the companies' core team move to the U.S. to be closer to their funders, and the result is lost growth.

We need this amazing talent. We need these entrepreneurs to stay right here in Canada. As a government, we need these companies to stay here at home in Canada because we want the jobs they create to be created here, at home in Canada.

Iain Klugman, CEO of Communitech, Waterloo Region's technology association, noted the significance of budget 2013 stating:

The two key barriers to growth for tech companies are access to talent and access to capital. Budget 2013 takes aim at helping companies overcome both of these barriers. The additional resources for NRC-IRAP and the Business Development Bank of Canada would increase the availability of much needed capital for Canada's tech companies.

Communitech was also pleased to see our government support entrepreneurship by supporting business incubators, and I would like to share a bit about the impact a business incubator can have on economic growth.

Communitech offers a business incubator program to high tech start-ups. The Communitech Hub opened in 2009 as part of a five-year digital strategy. Both were supported by this government. We see the benefits when large, established companies donate to support services for start-ups. We see the impact that peer-to-peer training and mentorship can deliver to young companies. We see the synergies that result when aspiring entrepreneurs are able to access bleeding edge technologies like the 3D virtual environment.

How do we see all of these very positive changes? Let us measure the impact against its five-year plan, just three years into that plan: 800 new digital media and mobile technology companies, eight times the forecast; 1,600 new jobs in start-up companies, 80% of the five-year goal; \$350 million in equity investments, more than triple the five-year goal.

As a result of this holistic approach to business development offered by the Hub, 83% of start-ups in the Communitech network are still in business after five years. That is almost double the industry average. These are the keys to a prosperous community.

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Speaking of prosperous communities, I must mention how pleased the communities that make up Kitchener—Conestoga were with this budget's commitment to renewing our infrastructure, a \$53 billion program in predictable infrastructure funding. This 10-year program would be the largest and longest federal commitment to infrastructure in Canadian history.

Its components include a \$14 billion renewal of the building Canada fund to support major economic infrastructure projects; a five-year plan to continue building infrastructure projects through innovative public-private partnerships, P3s; and more than \$32 billion in enhanced gas tax fund payments to provide predictable, application-free funding to municipalities.

This long-term, predictable funding is something our municipal partners have been requesting for years.

Also, while keeping on track for a return to surplus, we would invest new money to help move vulnerable Canadians off the streets, out of shelters and into stable housing, and invest directly in affordable housing.

For my home region of Waterloo, it is estimated that the gas tax fund improvements alone would channel an additional \$126 million to our local municipalities.

Grant Whittington, the chief administrative officer of Wilmot Township, sent me a note shortly after the budget, stating that he felt “the budget was well done and provided long-term financial support for municipal support for municipal infrastructure”. He concluded by noting that “The indexing of the Gas Tax Funding Program is very appreciated”.

Kitchener city councillor Berry Vrbanovic, also the past president of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, agreed, stating that “The Federal Government has delivered to municipalities with this budget”.

The FCM was even more effusive with its praise:

We applaud the government for choosing to continue moving our communities forward even as it meets its immediate fiscal challenges....

...it will spur growth and job creation while laying the foundation for a more competitive economy.

From engineers to educational institutions, from big business to small business to organized labour, from our communities and our newspapers, we are hearing the same thing, that the budget is good news for Canada.

•(1725)

I look forward to seeing Bill C-60, the economic action plan, passed and implemented quickly. Our communities need the funds to renew their infrastructure. Our unemployed need the training opportunities. Our businesses need the talent.

I ask all hon. members to support Bill C-60, which would make it easier for families to adopt a child and provide a healthy, nurturing environment; easier for charities to attract new donors, as proposed by my friend, the hon. member for Kitchener—Waterloo; easier for businesses to grow and innovate to create new jobs and better-paying jobs; easier to support the development and expansion of palliative care services for those who so desperately need them.

I am proud of this budget. I am proud of how Canadians have persevered through this time of economic adversity. I am confident in Canadians. The government shares that confidence. This budget and this bill reflect that confidence. I ask all hon. members to join me in supporting Bill C-60.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I noted that the hon. member spoke of apprenticeships and all the government is doing to encourage apprenticeships, yet it is reported that, despite the supposed measures, less than 50% of employers are providing apprenticeships.

By the way, members may not be aware, but apparently the government is the largest purchaser of construction activity in this country. Therefore, the building trades and construction workers are calling upon the government to actually require that all federal RFP bidders be required to provide a certain percentage of apprenticeships.

I wonder if the member would advise if he is willing to speak to his government and support such a directive.

•(1730)

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Mr. Speaker, in fact, that particular principle is included in this budget implementation bill. In fact I said in my speech that we would support the use of apprentices in federally funded projects and long-term infrastructure projects.

While I am on my feet speaking to that, just recently I held a round table in my riding dealing with the Canada jobs grant. It was amazing to see the uptake by our post-secondary institutions and our industries, to see how they are excited about this Canada jobs grant, which would link the people who need the training with the industry to find out what training they actually need.

It is quite clear that the action of this government would help address the skilled trades shortages in our country and, at the same time, provide those opportunities for businesses that are looking for these jobs that are unfilled right now and are not meeting the needs of our industry.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the issues that Canadians from coast to coast to coast are very much concerned with is the issue of health care.

When we think of health care, we know it was Pierre Trudeau who actually brought in the health care act. It was Jean Chrétien who prevented the tax shift from taking over, in terms of the funding of health care. Then it was Paul Martin who established the health care accord that ultimately led to today when we are giving billions of dollars in health care transfer cash over to the provinces.

Now, that agreement is expiring in 2014.

What is the current government going to be known for, in terms of health care for Canadians, given that even the money that is going into health care today is not because of the current Conservative government? It is because of a health care accord that was reached with the Paul Martin government back in 2004.

That agreement expires in 2014.

Where in this budget or anywhere within the government is there a commitment to health care into the future?

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Mr. Harold Albrecht: Mr. Speaker, it is interesting. The member has a selective memory. He went on about all the things the Liberal government implemented. However, what he forgot is a \$25-billion cut to health care and education transfers during the time when our provinces and municipalities were hurting. They were forced to come up with those dollars or do without.

We have committed not to cut our transfers to the provinces. The health care funding this government has provided and the increases in transfers to the provinces have been unprecedented.

In addition, in this budget, there are some new initiatives that I would hope my colleague would support, such as funding for the pallium project, to give funding to palliative care groups that are trying to provide front-line training so we can do a better job of providing palliative care to those who need it.

There are all kinds of others, Mr. Speaker, but I see you are cutting me off. Thank you.

Mr. Jeff Watson (Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member mentioned the palliative care. What he will not do, because I know he is a humble man, is take credit for a lot of the work he has done in respect of seeing investments like that in palliative care.

I want to commend my colleague for his discussion today on Bill C-60. Our government proposes to index the gas tax fund and that measure is included in Bill C-60. That measure is important for our communities and for our infrastructure.

Could the member comment on that? While I am at it, I am stunned to hear that the opposition will not support a measure like this for long-term predictable infrastructure funding for our communities, direct to them so they can do what they need to do.

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Mr. Speaker, the gas tax funding is permanent and indexed. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities and municipalities have been asking for long-term predictable funding for years. This government doubled it, has now made it permanent and has also indexed it. The municipalities are thrilled with the kind of support they see going forward and the long-term predictability is the best part of it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. José Nunez-Melo (Laval, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first, I must admit that when I was asked to prepare a speech on Bill C-60, I was quite interested because many of the proposed measures in the budget concern the municipality of Laval. Laval needs infrastructure and certain changes. I felt this was a good opportunity.

However, this morning, just before oral question period, the government once again cavalierly imposed time allocation on this bill. This reminded me of a session of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development that I attended. Some witnesses were clearly saying that the government was not on the right track when it came to its proposals for aid to developing countries, including wanting to merge Foreign Affairs and International Development with CIDA.

We have been opposed from the beginning to the Conservative caucus's recent way of doing things during debates and discussions. Even in committee, we can see this intransigent attitude, as the Conservatives reject outright every proposal and amendment put

forward by the opposition or interested groups, such as witnesses. The door is not open. This government does not listen.

The Conservatives talk about the action plan all day long, as though it is the be-all and end-all when it comes to Canada's economic growth over the next few years. I want to point out that this action plan was designed a few years ago, when our economy was in a different situation. The timing is off with this adjustment.

The government is still using old studies and projections as the basis for omnibus bills like this one, which include all kinds of things. Five committees had to study this bill. I will list them all, since that is unbelievable. Perhaps members can tell me how these committees are connected. The only logical connection I see would be between the Standing Committee on Finance and the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology.

The bill includes measures that affect the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration; the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities; the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs; and the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development.

The NDP alone proposed 33 amendments. They were all rejected outright, with no explanation. The government claims to listen, but it does not. It already has a set plan for what will happen. As I already mentioned this morning, just before question period, the government moved a time allocation motion. I know that times are tough right now and that there are problems everywhere. When the action plan was designed two or three years ago, it was a good thing.

● (1735)

However, employers are using the temporary foreign worker program, although there is no job stability for Canadian families, who are deeply in debt. This is not about job creation, but job stability. People are losing their jobs.

The Conservatives say they have created thousands of jobs, but they can create only public service jobs. The private sector has created these jobs.

They really cannot reconcile two things: they say they want to eliminate the deficit, but they are taking the wrong approach. To them, the right approach is to reduce spending. They have hobbled plenty of organizations that should receive lasting support to maintain economic growth.

One thing that struck me is that this bill gives broad powers to the Treasury Board. After being elected in May 2011, I began to sit in June 2011, like most members. From the outset, I was really surprised to see that my new role as a member promised to be very tough indeed. There was a lot to learn. Indeed, what I was faced with right off the bat was blatant and shocking, because I had to sit until midnight when we held a filibuster during that period in June 2011.

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It was about protecting the rights of workers to organize and negotiate a collective agreement with their employer without government intervention. This is dangerous. The Conservatives ignored these rights. They said that was what they wanted to do and they did it. They say that Canadians gave them a majority mandate after the 2011 election, but I think this mandate has been misinterpreted.

I am sure most Conservative members promised their constituents that they would duly represent them and defend their interests here in the House of Commons. However, what is happening instead is that in practice, policy and cabinet are governed by and firmly in line with the predetermined policies of the Conservative elite.

Bill C-60 sends the message that the Conservatives intend to keep Canadians in the dark and change a whole lot of bills without holding consultations. The consultations they do hold are pointless because they do not seem to listen to what people say. The people on the other side are not giving us logical answers. They latch onto an idea from the very beginning and will not let go.

We have reached an impasse, and they are running roughshod over democracy. Opposition members are all constantly seeking answers and solutions to problems that those in government more or less ignore. The only thing they care about is their ideology.

• (1740)

This is the result.

I am very disappointed, and I stand by our caucus's original position.

We will strongly oppose this bill because it makes no sense at all.

• (1745)

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, earlier in the member's speech, he said that Canada's economic action plan was probably a good thing a couple of years ago. That is what he specifically said.

I recall that he went on to say later in his speech that opposition members filibustered the passage of the bill, which I could not quite understand, because on the one hand he said it was a good thing but then later in his speech mentioned how he and his party filibustered the bill to delay what he called a good thing.

He also then talked about balancing the budget without making cuts. I am wondering if the hon. member might help me understand the formula that he and the NDP intend to use with respect to balancing the budget without making cuts. Because New Democrats have apparently studied this a great deal, I wonder if he could present to us what specific areas they would change or address in the budget, such as where, if there are cuts, they would come from, what the corresponding savings would be, and where the increased expenditures would come from in the changes that he is proposing. He has not given details. I wonder if he could be a bit more specific.

[*Translation*]

Mr. José Nunez-Melo: Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to my honourable colleague's question.

I did say that the action plan was probably a good thing, but only insofar as it was a plan. The Conservative caucus's problem is that it has not proven that it has the management skills to implement the plan. The Conservatives are flying by the seat of their pants, and we can all see how that is working out.

As for balancing the budget, if our colleague knows what he is talking about, then he knows that a budget is a series of estimates. The end of the story cannot be determined in advance.

Balancing the budget is not a problem. It is all in the accounting, as they say.

There is, however, just one magic word: "management". That is what the Conservatives are doing so poorly.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member made reference to balancing and management. I would like to point out that for Liberals, it is an issue of credibility.

We need to recognize that when the Conservatives became government, they had a multi-billion-dollar surplus. Their management ultimately led to a multi-billion-dollar deficit. That is a very important point.

The other thing that is important to note is that now the government says it is going to turn the deficit, which it created, into a balance surplus for the 2015-16 budget.

The question I have for the member is this: does he agree with me in being somewhat skeptical that the day by which the government is proclaiming it will have that surplus or that balanced budget is after the next federal election?

It seems to me that the Conservatives might be playing a bit of politics, knowing full well they have had an inability to achieve a balanced budget and now promising a balanced budget after the next federal election. Does he take issue with that?

[*Translation*]

Mr. José Nunez-Melo: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my honourable colleague for the question. He really hit the nail on the head. I will explain the situation.

Management is certainly very interesting. If I am not mistaken, when the Conservatives came to power in 2006, there was a huge surplus, which they obliterated and turned into the deficit we have today. Now they are doing all kinds of acrobatics and chasing their own tails, like dogs sometimes do, as they try to fix the situation. They are also electioneering, of course.

Nevertheless, they will not succeed.

• (1750)

[*English*]

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise today to speak on our economy and our government's economic action plan 2013. The implementation of our new budget will have a positive impact on the lives of all Canadians.

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Continuing to follow in the successful path blazed by economic action plan 2012, our government is squarely focused on what matters to Canadians: creating jobs and economic growth and securing Canada's long-term prosperity.

Our government continues to make common sense changes to the way government is run and the way taxpayers' money is spent. This plan will serve to create a more efficient government, one that would see Canada return to balanced budgets in 2015, while at the same time keeping federal taxes at their lowest level in 50 years.

Today we would like to highlight several aspects of how our government plans to achieve our goals of job creation, economic growth and long-term prosperity.

To succeed in the goals we have set out, we are focused on furthering our trade relationship with the United States as well as opening up new and emerging markets for Canadians, attracting new high-quality jobs at home by keeping corporate taxes low, reducing burdens to our businesses through the removal of red tape, fostering entrepreneurial talent and ideas with increased research and development funding and better aligning our immigration system with the needs of the Canadian economy.

Achieving these goals, along with our plan to return to balanced budgets in 2015, confirms our financial responsibility with taxpayers' dollars. An important way to provide better value for taxpayers' money while creating jobs and economic growth relies heavily on public-private partnerships, or P3s. Economic action plan 2013 proposes \$1.25 billion over five years to renew the P3 Canada fund.

This renewal is part of a new building Canada plan that would see \$53 billion in funding over 10 years. Under P3 arrangements, governments would continue to own infrastructure assets while the private sector would play a larger role in their design, construction, operation and maintenance. Canada is becoming a leader in P3s, and our government is committed to supporting the further development of the Canadian P3 market.

The new Windsor-Detroit international crossing is a project that exemplifies what our government aims for in P3 projects. The Windsor-Detroit trade corridor is the most important international land crossing in North America, handling almost 30% of Canada-U.S. surface trade, worth \$120 billion per year. This new crossing would accelerate the movement of international trade, increase the competitiveness of the Canadian manufacturing sector and create thousands of new jobs.

The United States remains Canada's closest ally and biggest trading partner. Our two countries have a tremendous stake in each other's success. The Windsor-Detroit international crossing project will include a 6-lane bridge across the Detroit River, customs plazas on both sides of the border and a connection to Interstate 75 in Michigan.

As well, the construction of a parkway that will connect the new crossing to Highway 401 is already under way as a separate P3 project, supported by a federal contribution from the gateways and border crossings fund. Economic action plan 2013 proposes \$25 million over three years to advance the Windsor-Detroit international crossing project into pre-procurement.

Getting people, goods and services across the Canada-U.S. border is critical to our country's prosperity, but we all have to be working very hard to expand trade with other countries. Trade is a vital part of Canada's economy. In fact, one in every five Canadian jobs is linked to exports, and trade accounts for more than 60% of Canada's GDP.

Current trade negotiations build on a record of new free trade agreements with nine countries in less than six years. Recently, our government has also committed to increasing trade with the Asia-Pacific region, the countries of the European Union, Brazil, China and India.

In addition to opening up new and emerging markets, we also must place heavy focus on attracting responsible foreign investment here in Canada. Our government's low-tax plan serves to encourage development in existing companies while establishing Canada as an investment destination for an increasing number of corporate taxpayers.

When our government first came into power in 2006, the corporate tax rate was 21%. This was reduced to 19% in 2009, 18% in 2010, 16.5% in 2011 and currently sits at 15%. As result, we have seen the creation of nearly 1.5 million net new jobs since January 2006, the best record of job growth in the G7.

● (1755)

Aside from our low-tax plan, small and medium-sized businesses also require the right resources and incentives to advance new ideas, allowing them to become more competitive and create and sustain high-paying, value-added jobs.

Our government's economic action plan is committed to the success of Canadian entrepreneurs, innovators and world-class researchers. Since 2006, our government has provided more than \$9 billion in new funds to support science, technology and the growth of innovative ideas. Economic action plan 2013 proposes to build on this strong foundation, helping to position Canada for sustainable long-term economic prosperity and a higher quality of life for Canadians.

Venture capital plays an important role in promoting a more innovative economy by providing the investment resources needed for high-potential small and medium-sized businesses to grow. Recognizing the importance of the venture capital industry to our future growth, economic action plan 2012 announced \$400 million to help increase the private sector investments in early-stage risk capital and to support the creation of large-scale venture capital funds led by the private sector. The venture capital action plan, which was strategically deployed as \$400 million in new capital for the next seven to 10 years, is expected to attract close to \$1 billion in new private sector investments.

To ensure that Canada remains a global research and innovation leader, economic action plan 2013 plans to advance the venture capital action plan. We will provide \$60 million over five years to help outstanding and high-potential incubator and accelerator organizations in Canada expand their services to entrepreneurs. Economic action plan 2013 would also make available \$100 million through the Business Development Bank of Canada for strategic partnerships with business accelerators and co-investments in graduate firms.

Of course, in order for businesses to take full advantage of these programs and services, we must continue to reduce the amount of red tape restricting economic growth. Our government is already implementing a one-for-one rule requiring regulators to provide red tape relief for businesses equal to any new burden they introduce. As a result, nine regulations have been repealed under the one-for-one rule since April 2012, saving \$3.3 million in the administrative burden on businesses.

As part of the red tape reduction efforts in economic action plan 2013, the Canada Revenue Agency has created a dedicated team responsible for coordinating and addressing small business issues. With this new team, the CRA would be better able to help small businesses avoid costly and time-consuming audits by raising awareness of their tax obligations in order to help them get it right from the start. In addition, effective April 2013 the CRA will ensure that the approval process for the authorization of a third party to conduct business tax matters on behalf of the business owners is more timely and responsive.

The CRA's efforts and sustained approach to reducing red tape were acknowledged in January, when the hon. Minister of National Revenue was awarded the Canadian Federation of Independent Business's golden scissors award. Our balanced approach to business regulation and ongoing effort to reduce red tape will serve to create a more predictable environment for businesses to thrive and prosper in the long term.

A strong, stable and prosperous Canadian economy does not rely upon business investments, trade agreements or a favourable tax atmosphere alone. Our government is striving to establish a more flexible immigration system that is streamlined, highly efficient and aimed at attracting talented newcomers with the skills and experience our economy needs. We have already made significant progress in implementing long-overdue reforms to the Canadian immigration system and will continue with these reforms to make the system faster, more flexible and more focused on Canadian labour market needs.

As part of economic action plan 2013, our government will reopen the federal skilled worker program with an updated points system that would give more weight to factors that are directly related to economic success. This policy aims to fill in gaps where there are recognized skills shortages. This is why economic action plan 2013 continues our commitment to improve foreign credential recognition for additional target occupations under the pan-Canadian framework for the assessment and recognition of foreign qualifications.

Through the implementation of previous budgets, Canada has experienced one of the best economic performances in the G7. We were able to accomplish this during the global recession and

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throughout the recovery. Canadians have put their trust in us, and we are committed to delivering on their expectations by focusing on job creation and economic growth while returning to balanced budgets.

I look forward to seeing the positive outcomes that the implementation of this new budget will bring as we continue to move toward a stronger and more prosperous Canada.

• (1800)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by thanking my colleague across the aisle for his speech.

With regard to the budget, I took the time to broadly consult the people of my riding to find out what they thought of the Conservatives' budget and what their priorities are. I received hundreds of replies. The people of my riding are worried about a number of things, and I promised to defend their values and priorities by asking the Conservative government some questions.

The most important thing for the people of Alfred-Pellan is to get some answers regarding the elimination of the labour-sponsored funds tax credit. This tax credit is extremely important to Quebec. It supports employment and small business development in all regions of the province. It has a tremendous impact on our economy.

My colleague opposite talked about jobs and prosperity. I would like to hear what he thinks of the fact that, with this measure, the government is attacking Quebec's small businesses and our workers, who deserve so much more than that.

[*English*]

Mr. Dean Allison: Mr. Speaker, when we look at what we could do to create jobs, we constantly have invested in research and development. What we will not do is cut back on R and D but may we shift around what that looks like. We realize that as a country we spend a high proportionate amount of dollars on R and D spending.

In recent years the challenge has been that we have not seen the kind of value we need in terms of commercialization. We would certainly like to create more companies like RIM. That is important. We realize it has been very successful.

Therefore, as we look at how we can target our money for R and D, there will be some changes made over time, but our government's commitment is to still spend money in that field because we believe that is important for creating the jobs of the future.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over the last four or five years, we have witnessed a Conservative government that has brought a net increase in taxes. It would have us believe that it has decreased taxes when the reality is the opposite. We see that in this budget, with the number of increases in different tariffs, even with tariffs where there are no companies manufacturing the same type of product.

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The government is cashing in on literally millions of additional tax dollars through things like tariffs, in particular.

As there has been a net increase in overall taxes being paid by Canadians, why has the government seen fit to increase taxes?

Mr. Dean Allison: Mr. Speaker, our government has continually cut taxes. As a result, families now see a difference of almost over \$3,000 in their income every year.

Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the ways to elevate debate here is to ensure that any representation that is made is one that has some legitimacy.

A little while ago, the member for Winnipeg North posed a question regarding housing. The answer that came back was not one that was representative of what was in the budget. Therefore, I would like to ask my hon. colleague from Niagara West—Glanbrook about affordable housing and the landmark investments this government has made, which no other federal government made for almost the last three decades.

Mr. Dean Allison: Mr. Speaker, that is one of the things this government has been very stringent on in terms of being responsible and looking out for those who are less fortunate. If we look at the commitments we have made in this budget, there are \$119 million a year over five years for the homelessness partnering strategy, which continues to move forward. That is almost \$600 million over the next five years just for that program alone. In terms of the affordable housing strategy, we have also committed \$253 million per year over the next five years for that.

If we total up the amount of money that we have committed toward the homelessness partnering and affordable housing strategies, that money is in excess of \$1.7 billion over the next five years. That quite clearly demonstrates our commitment to those who are less fortunate.

• (1805)

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak to Bill C-60. I know you have been in the House a number of times when I had a chance to talk about the border and you will hear more about that. The previous member did mention what was taking place with the Windsor-Detroit corridor, with a new public border crossing being created.

There have been some positive steps that have taken place, which have been supported by all parties in the House for the most part. However, some decisions need to be made for the future. Unfortunately, the Conservative government is exposing the new border crossing to some potential issues.

We all know that there has been a challenge with Matty Moroun, who is the owner of the Ambassador Bridge. He has private American ownership. Basically, there are around 25 international bridges and tunnels between Canada and the United States and only two are held in the private sector, the Ambassador Bridge and the AbitibiBowater Bridge in Fort Francis and International Falls.

Why is this important for the Windsor-Detroit corridor?

For those who do not know, in the riding that I represent there are four crossings that span around two miles which represent

approximately 40% of the daily trade to the United States. However, with 34 states having Canada as their number one trading partner, this key system of infrastructure has yet to be addressed with the border authority. A border authority would help with the efficiency of our trade. It would allow goods and services to travel more freely and in a better organized fashion.

From the far west, we have the Hazmat Truck Ferry. There is the Ambassador bridge, which takes just over 30% of the daily trade. There is the Detroit-Windsor rail tunnel, which is an aging piece of infrastructure, but hopefully a new one will be coming. However, I am not sure we will have support for that right now from the government. We are waiting to see the decision on that and if the application process will still go forward. Last, we have the Windsor-Detroit tunnel which has mostly vehicles that go through it and some trucks make use of it as well.

The reason I mention this is because the Conservative government is embarking on a public-private partnership for the border. However, the government is not going with the agreement that is normally used for infrastructure improvements on other bridges and crossings, which is needed to exercise leveraged borrowing through public bonds, such as they do in the U.S. This is one of the ways in which the Americans have gone about their process for twinning infrastructure pieces in the past and look to that for future developments. The Peace Bridge and the Blue Water Bridge are two examples of that. Those areas also have a border authority.

However, we have yet to see the details of the management of our new border crossing, but the public-private partnership the Conservatives are proposing could be fraught with issues, which I have raised. We will have to use a carrot-stick approach and see whether someone from the private sector will bid on it.

It will be a very ambitious project because the bridge will have to span across the Detroit River, yet it has to have enough carriage space underneath to allow transport freighters go through. This is one of the busiest waterways in the world for freighters and private boats. It is very important that the proposal does not touch the Detroit water, that it is a different type of bridge from one that has footings in the water, otherwise the IJC is triggered and it will take much longer.

The reason I bring all that up is, again, the public-private partnership, which is a challenge with regard to our process because it is not vetted. We have gone through this before for our border crossing and I am really concerned that we will need major incentives which would raise the tolls, and the tolls are an additional tax on citizens. There is no doubt about that.

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There is a difference between a public and private partnership. Recently, the city of Windsor successfully sued for its portion of the tunnel. We were in a relationship there, but the operator and owner of the tunnel kept it past the 50-year date line that they were supposed to and kept the proceeds as well. When I was on city council, the mayor, Mike Hurst, successfully sued. We found a document showing that the owner had to return the tunnel to the public. However, we found the state of the tunnel in such disrepair that we had to put millions of dollars into it right away just for it to be safe. The private sector had a different model, which was basically to sponge every nickel out of the thing. The result was it did not put the maintenance money into it.

● (1810)

Now successfully operating under the city of Windsor, it provides a revenue stream to the city for infrastructure and other projects and it has been fixed up and repaired.

Interestingly, the private sector on the other side of the border, which owns the lease agreements from the city of Detroit, actually charges more money for crossing than what we charge on the Canadian side. Again, it is going to squeeze everything it can. In fact, it does not even have parity in terms of money, despite the dollar being close to parity with the United States over a number of years. That is one of the issues I want to touch on a bit later.

I will leave it at that for the border, but we are a far way from being done and the public-private partnership that we have is a big exposure because the finances are not allocated right at this time.

As New Democrats, we have been raising questions about the process that has taken place for this budget bill and what has happened. It is important that I lay out a bit about why we believe the process is so broken and it is one of the reasons the Conservatives are going back to fix things that they tried to fix in the last budget bills.

A number of years ago, it was the Paul Martin administration under the Liberals that started to add components of legislation in the budget bill. "Omnibus bills" is what they are specifically known as and they have a number of different things that are travelling with the bill that would normally have an independent process. That is important because this is similar to what the Americans call "riders", where they attach all kinds of unusual things as they cut deals to try to get the budget passed, so all kinds of pet projects and things will go through.

The issues we are dealing with in this budget bill are very serious. We have the Immigration Act, the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade Act, the Investment Canada Act, to say a few, that in the budget bill as opposed to having a full vetting at committees.

The committee systems are important. At a committee we have a number of different individuals who will be invited to come forward, provide their testimony and then from there we get experts and we really hash it out. Sometimes there is actually support for legislation and for changes or we find mistakes in bills that were put forth accidentally. Not all legislation is drafted in a pristine manner and will pass the test of metal, so it requires amendments. Amendments will be made, voted on and then returned here to this chamber. That

is the normal process and usually it takes a bit longer, but at the same time it makes for better legislation. Unfortunately, all these different things have been put in front of us.

The committees that the budget bill has gone to have been the finance committee, the industry committee, the citizenship and immigration committee, the human resources and skills development committee, the veterans affairs committee and the foreign affairs and international development committee. Through that process, despite looking at spending billions of dollars, there were 33 amendments by the New Democrats, 8 by the Liberals and zero from the Conservatives. Therefore, what we see is a budget bill that will go through with very little debate and expert review.

I would just make one other point with regard to the finances in the budget. The budget continues on a reckless path of cutting revenues without increasing the access to supports that we need to pay for some of them. This is what I am referring to with regard to corporate tax cuts that continue. We are borrowing money and we will be paying interest on those corporate tax cuts because we do not have a surplus right now. Therefore, we are taking resources out of our system and paying a premium for them at a time when we should not be doing that.

That is how the HST was brought in. I commissioned an independent paper that looked at the HST when we had to borrow \$6 billion to do so and if we got back to a surplus and paid it off in 10 years, as an independent paper estimated, we would spend around \$8 billion to bring it in. Therefore, when we are going to pay a premium for something, we had better get something of value out of it and I do not think we are.

This budget continues subsidies for the oil and gas industry. It supports tax reductions for banks, insurance companies and others that certainly are making a profit right now.

We need to make better decisions.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to pick up on the point the member made in reference to the process in committees.

In bringing in time allocation, the government likes to say that it has allocated the bill out to six committees to have thorough debate and discussion. I sit on the citizenship and immigration committee. When the bill came before our committee, the Liberal Party was given a full 10 minutes to deal with the changes that were being implemented in this budget. A full 10 minutes, which means 5 minutes of questioning with 5 minutes of answers. It did not quite work out to 5 and 5, but the point is it is only 10 minutes.

The question I have for the member is in regard to the manner in which the government is pushing through Bill C-60. It is very anti-democratic, as it continues to rely on time allocation and prevents individuals from being able to speak out and giving their concerns and ideas. The member made reference to amendments, which the government does not respond to, whether by allowing for proper time or considering positive changes that are being suggested.

Does the member want to provide comment on that?

Government Orders

•(1815)

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, I understand the immigration committee only heard from the department and not from any witnesses.

This budget bill has a number of serious tax increases and fees on immigration, as well temporary foreign worker issues. This affects our overall economy. Immigration is very important in this country. I come from an area of the country that is the fourth most diverse in terms of population. We have a city of only 200,000 people. We are not the size of Montreal, Toronto or Vancouver, but we still are the fourth most diverse.

It is important that we actually have those witnesses come forward so that we can see the consequences. If we do not do that, we are not going to have good legislation.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Rousseau (Compton—Stanstead, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my hon. colleague from Windsor West on his excellent speech.

Tax cuts for multinationals, in other words, big corporate cuts, have had a measurable impact on workforce succession.

No investments have been made in workforce succession. We have an aging population and an aging workforce in many economic sectors, including the automotive sector. The government has not looked at how important succession planning is. The next generation will make up the workforce for the next 15, 20 and 25 years.

Tax cuts are all well and good. Since 2006, the Conservatives have cut the corporate tax rate from 21% to 15%. Where has that money gone? Into the pockets of CEOs. Some 20 of the richest CEOs in Canada earn nearly \$5 million or more a year. That is how large corporations work. Thus, there is no incentive for workforce succession planning.

Since his riding is very industrial and relies on manufacturing, good succession planning is crucial.

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, the auto sector requires a much more robust developed strategy. We do not have that, not in this budget bill and not as policy. A classic example is other industries affecting manufacturing and the auto industry, and in preparing for the transition of the workplace, where we spend those resources is important.

Let us look at some of these issues, like the oil and gas industry, in terms of its subsidization, and continued subsidization. Not only does it get a tax cut but it has other things, like a flow-through shares subsidy, a Canadian exploration expense that it can claim, a Canadian development expense it can claim, and a Canadian oil and gas property expense it can claim. With the subsidies from the government and its programs for taxes, it actually had a \$28.7-billion holiday in 2008 alone.

Hon. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for the opportunity to speak about the important measures our government has taken in introducing budget 2013 and the budget implementation act. It comes as no surprise that we are continuing to focus on the economy. Getting our economy to fire on

all cylinders remains our top priority as without continued growth, we cannot get Canadians into the job market and pay for services we expect from government.

I am also pleased to report that our plan is working. Last week, Statistics Canada announced the economy grew by 2.5% in the first quarter of 2013. This represents the strongest quarterly growth in nearly two years. Additionally, Statistics Canada positively revised our economic growth in the fourth quarter of 2012, up from 0.6% to 0.9%. The solid economic growth in the first quarter of 2013 is the seventh straight quarter of positive growth, and is another sign that Canada's economy remains on the right side.

The over 900,000 net new jobs created in Canada since the depth of the global recession, with over 90% full time and nearly 75% private sector, represents the best job growth record in the entire G7.

Saying that, we know there is more work to be done, and there is no greater priority for me right now than helping to position Canada's economy for success over the long term.

Many of the businesses in my neck of the woods in Edmonton have trouble finding skilled workers to fill vacant positions. Every time a job remains unfilled, it means that the businesses are not growing as fast as they could. It is frustrating to know that there are countless vacant positions across the country, and especially in Alberta. They are not being filled, while we have many Canadians looking for jobs.

In fact, CIBC World Markets stated in a report in December 2012 that 30% of businesses are facing a skilled labour shortage. The Construction Sector Council has declared that between 2012 and 2020, the construction sector will need 319,000 new workers. Engineers Canada projects that 95,000 professional engineers will retire by 2020 and the Environmental Careers Organization of Canada says that with 100,000 employees reaching retirement in the next decade, numerous opportunities will open up for students and new graduates in that sector.

In addition to those labour market challenges, our demographics are changing. Our population is aging rapidly and becoming increasingly diverse. There are too many groups and important segments of our populations that are under-represented in the labour force.

In light of this news I was thrilled to hear the Minister of Finance announce the creation of a Canada jobs grant. I truly believe that this would transform the way Canadians seeking to upgrade their education and skills will enter the job market. It is important that we seize upon this opportunity and meet the challenge head on.

Government Orders

Many of us in this House understand the details of the jobs grant, but I think it is worth outlining in some detail what it means for people out there who are looking for work. In the near future, our government would begin negotiations with the provinces and territories to transform labour market agreements to include this very important measure. We would also reach out to employers and other interested stakeholders to ensure the program is designed with the full intent of getting people the qualifications they need to get jobs in high demand fields.

The Canada jobs grant is innovative, as it purposely includes employers to invest in training employees. The jobs grant would require employers to contribute up to \$5,000 per person, which would be matched by both the federal and provincial governments. This means the grants could provide up to \$15,000 per person. This is an important building block in getting our economy up to full speed.

Having the private sector form partnerships with different levels of government would ensure that we are getting the highest return on investment. It is the employers who will be using these people, so it is only logical that they be involved in the process of training. This process would almost guarantee that people coming out with their new skills will be going into a job.

To sum this up, it means that the job grant would successfully match people with the right skill set to the right jobs. Upon full implementation, it is expected that nearly 130,000 Canadians every year would benefit from the jobs grants. This would have an immediate effect on the economy. I believe that many more people from all walks of life would be able to find meaningful employment in their field.

Another important measure that budget 2013 announced was the funding to reduce barriers to accreditation of apprentices. Particularly in today's day and age, people are mobile and follow jobs across the country.

Just in my own constituency of Edmonton Centre, there are people from every province and territory who have moved there to find that all-important job. Given these factors, we must make it easier for apprentices to work across the country.

I was pleased to see our government take action and to start the important process of working with the provinces and territories to harmonize requirements for apprenticeships, as well as examine the use of practical tests as a method of assessment in targeting skilled trades.

● (1820)

On top of the measures I have already mentioned, budget 2013 announced initiatives to help young people and Canadians with disabilities get into the job market. We would be supporting more internships for recent post-secondary graduates. We would also be investing new money and training for on-reserve income recipients and would be introducing a first nations education act. Collectively, all of these measures would transform the economy while making it easier for Canadians to get a job and for businesses to grow.

The other area I want to talk on is the important tax relief measures our government has introduced since 2006 and continues to implement through the budget implementation act. As I go door-

knocking throughout my constituency, hold town halls and engage in regular correspondence, my constituents continue to tell me how our tax relief measures are leaving more money in their pockets. They appreciate how they now have more means to pay for things that matter to them.

Since forming government in 2006, we have provided tax relief to Canadians in over 150 different ways. The average family of four now receives \$3,200 in extra tax savings as a result of our initiatives, and that is money in their pockets. I want to highlight some of the more significant tax relief measures that Canadians benefit from.

In 2006, I was pleased to run on a platform that reduced the GST to 5% and exempted the first \$10,000 of student scholarship or bursary income from taxation, and introduced a tax credit for up to \$500 a year for textbooks. Those are commitments we made and quickly delivered on. We have increased the amount of money people can earn without paying income tax. We introduced the tax-free savings account that has allowed Canadians to earn tax-free investment income, with more than 8.2 million Canadians signing on.

Our government introduced the child tax credit, the children's fitness credit and the children's arts tax credit, which now makes it more affordable for families to keep their children active. We introduced the registered disability savings plan, which helps families save for the long-term financial security of those with a severe disability. We introduced the new family caregiver tax credit and removed the \$10,000 limit on eligible expenses that caregivers can claim under the medical expense tax credit.

The list goes on and on.

I cannot stress enough how these measures have helped increase Canadians' quality of life. Even though every Canadian is benefiting from these measures, low-income and middle-income Canadians are receiving the greatest relief. In total, our government has provided almost \$160 billion in tax relief over a six-year period.

We have taken more than one million low-income Canadians off the tax rolls, and now the federal tax burden is the lowest it has been in 50 years.

There is more work to do.

That is why in this budget implementation act, we would be providing tax relief for Canadian Armed Forces members and police officers deployed on international missions. To better meet the health care needs of Canadians, we would be expanding the GST exemption for publicly funded homemaker services to include personal care services. We would be introducing a new temporary first-time donor's super credit to encourage young Canadians to donate to charity. We would be enhancing the adoption expense tax credit to better recognize costs unique to adoption.

Government Orders

These are just a few of the measures found in the budget implementation act that would assist Canadians and continue to lower their tax burden. As I continue to meet with constituents and businesses over the summer, I am looking forward to hearing their thoughts on how to further provide tax relief and better grow our economy and their prosperity. As members of Parliament, we must continue to work together to pass important legislation such as the budget implementation act that will build a stronger economy as we continue to face a challenging economic environment.

Canadians sent us here to get things done. I strongly believe that measures such as the new Canada job grant, our initiatives to get more people into the workforce, and the plethora of tax relief benefits will help our economy grow and greatly assist the people we serve.

I encourage all members of the House to vote for this legislation and to work together for the benefit of all Canadians.

• (1825)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member opposite for his speech.

At the end of his speech, he said that he was looking forward to speaking with his constituents this summer. We are all looking forward to getting back to our ridings to see what our constituents think of the work we are doing in the House.

I was able to do some of that this spring when the budget was introduced. I showed it to my constituents to see what they thought about it. We received a lot of feedback from people in the riding of Alfred-Pellan, people from Duvernay, Saint-François, Auteuil, Vimont and other communities. Residents of Laval decided to get involved and tell us what they like and do not like about this budget.

A number of points were raised about this budget. For one, there is the fact that the President of the Treasury Board will have more authority to interfere in collective agreements.

I am wondering what my colleague opposite thinks about the fact that the government is directly attacking workers by, among other things, eliminating the labour-sponsored funds tax credit and giving the President of the Treasury Board more powers?

What does he think?

[*English*]

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Mr. Speaker, in response to her supposed issue about the President of the Treasury Board, the simple fact is that we have a lot of crown corporations in this country—VIA Rail, CBC, Canada Post, and the list goes on—that are independent and at arm's length, but they operate with taxpayer dollars. We are responsible for ensuring that those taxpayer dollars are spent properly. There is a requirement for us to have some oversight and some insight into what is going on with those agreements so that one does not get totally out of whack with the other.

It is simply being responsible. It is simply ensuring that the taxpayer dollars that go to all those crown corporations are expended properly.

• (1830)

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, earlier in debate, the member for Laval mentioned the NDP approach to balancing the budget, which did not include tax cuts. I can only assume that it is code for increasing taxes to do that.

The hon. member talked a lot about how important cutting taxes for Canadian families and businesses was, and has been, to the economic growth we have seen in this country. I wonder if he might expand a bit on his thoughts with respect to dramatic increases in taxes on Canadians, how that might impact our job growth going forward and how that would impact Canadian families.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Mr. Speaker, we have made a habit, a good habit, of reducing taxes for Canadians individually, reducing corporate taxes, and reducing taxes on small businesses, and that has done nothing but create jobs and put money in people's pockets.

I do not want to ascribe motives, but when the NDP members talk about the dangers of reducing taxes, I would say, frankly, that it is exactly the opposite. I would not want to be around if they ever got the chance, and God forbid if they do, to reverse a lot of the tax measures we have brought in that have benefited Canadian families and have benefited Canadian businesses to the point that those businesses can hire more Canadians so that we can put more money back into the pockets of Canadian families.

[*Translation*]

Mr. José Nunez-Melo (Laval, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for his speech, precisely because of what just happened. Another hon. member said that I spoke about cutting taxes. However, what I said—and this is my question for the hon. member—is that when the government makes a plan, it should also plan its implementation. That requires management skills, and those need to be proven. So far, the Conservatives have not done their homework. They have totally missed the mark, and that is why they have a deficit.

How can the Conservatives fix the situation now?

[*English*]

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Mr. Speaker, I would point out to my colleague that Canada is 2.5% of the world economy. When the rest of the world is sinking, we are going to be down with it.

The simple fact is that in relative terms, we are much better off than just about all the rest of the world. It is because of the economic policies this government has followed. It is because of the strong banking system. It is because of a combination of things.

The proof in the pudding is, again, seven quarters in a row of economic growth. It was 2.5% in the last quarter, which is the strongest quarterly growth in the last two years. Economic growth in the last quarter is up from .6% to .9%. I think we are exactly on the right track.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House to debate Bill C-60, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 21, 2013 and other measures.

Government Orders

Once again, the Conservatives did not allow a single amendment to their bill in committee. Now we are at report stage in the House, and the bill is deeply flawed. Nevertheless, it will be passed as is if the Liberal Party's amendments at report stage are rejected. Even though the Conservatives are not listening, I would like to use my time to explain how this bill will affect Quebec's economy.

All Quebecers—except for the Conservative MPs, who are loath to lift a finger for Quebec—are scandalized by the elimination of the tax credit for labour-sponsored funds. Driven by their ideology, the Conservatives have decided to gradually eliminate the tax credit for contributions to labour-sponsored funds because they want to hurt unions. The credit will drop from 15% to 10% on March 1, 2015, then from 10% to 5% on March 1, 2016, and it will be eliminated altogether on March 1, 2017.

The Conservatives used a June 2012 study by the OECD to justify this attack on unions. The study recommended eliminating the tax credit for labour-sponsored funds because they offered lower returns than private funds. The study, however, was based on analyses from the early 2000s, and it is a poor reflection of Quebec's reality, which is much different from the rest of Canada's.

Quebeckers are dismayed at this change. The Conservatives might be surprised to hear that it is not the unions crying foul at the government's decision; it is chambers of commerce across the province. They are all united in sounding the alarm. A brief look at the statistics shows why.

This tax credit affects Quebec directly because take-up in our province is 85%. These very popular funds are a huge help to small and medium-sized businesses. They are a staple of Quebec's economy and retirement savings. According to the Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal, labour-sponsored funds have helped create or maintain over 35,000 jobs.

Venture capital is plentiful in Quebec. According to the Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal, if we look at the province's venture capital-to-GDP ratio, Quebec ranks third among OECD member countries and is well above the Canadian average. Having access to venture capital is vital to the start-up of many companies. Given that there is generally less entrepreneurship in Quebec than in the rest of Canada, we have to understand that putting another obstacle in the way of starting up businesses could be devastating to Quebec's economy.

Labour-sponsored funds generally make long-term investments in businesses. This allows entrepreneurs to start up a company and keep it going until it turns a profit, which can take a number of years. These funds generally also invest in smaller-scale projects than private funds, which makes it possible to help businesses that would not otherwise obtain any funding.

We know that these funds complement private funds rather than compete against them. Together, they allow Quebec to have a competitive economy and, above all, to be one of the most creative places in the world.

I have to speak out against the elimination of the tax credit for labour-sponsored funds and also the phasing-out of funding for Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions.

Last year, the government said that cuts to the organization's operating budget would result in reductions in administrative costs, but not transfers. However, transfers to businesses will be at their lowest level since the law was enacted to establish the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec in 2005.

For example, in 2005, \$286 million was paid out in transfers. In 2010-11, \$424 million was paid out. The Conservatives plan to pay out only \$212 million in 2013-14.

• (1835)

Taking inflation into account, we quickly realize that the Conservatives are also looking to gradually eliminate the agency. As I previously asked here in the House, will the Conservatives stand up and tell us clearly what they intend to do with Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions? Are they planning on abolishing it, as they are doing with the tax credit for labour-sponsored funds? Many Quebec businesses need this government assistance. What is the Conservative plan? Why do most of their cuts directly target Quebec?

Another serious problem with this bill is that it calls into question the autonomy of crown corporations, including CBC/Radio-Canada, Canada Post and VIA Rail. Everyone knows that the Conservatives like to control everything and they never hesitate to extend the scope of this control. Many Canadians are justifiably concerned about this government's lack of transparency.

In my case, since this bill was introduced I have received five times more correspondence on this issue than on any others.

The government now wants to interfere in the collective bargaining process. It is talking about reducing the compensation of crown corporation employees, including their pensions.

I do not understand why Conservatives have such a rigid ideology. With this budget, they are taking advantage of their majority position to impose their vision on Canadians. This budget is openly hostile to workers, including employees of crown corporations.

Another major concern about this bill is that it does not do enough to stimulate the economy, particularly with regard to youth unemployment. We all know that young people have been hit hard by the economic crisis. Today, their unemployment rate is 5% higher than before the economic crisis. It is very disconcerting. As we speak, young people have just finished or are finishing up their semester. They racked up debt all year long in order to pay for tuition, housing, food and other things. However, they will have a hard time finding a summer job. For them, the summer is the only time when they can put a bit of money in their pockets.

Government Orders

If they do not get a job this summer, some young people will have to drop out of school temporarily or permanently only to, quite often, end up working for minimum wage. Many will not be able to resume their studies because they will not have the money to pay for another year of school. Those who pursue their studies anyway will have to tighten their belts, which will have an adverse economic impact. They will consume less this summer, which will decrease revenues for a number of businesses.

I am asking my Conservative colleagues: where are the measures for boosting youth employment? Where is the government's vision for young people? There is nothing for them in this budget, just bad news for their future.

I could go on and on about many other aspects of the budget that concern me. I raised a number of points at second reading. I raised more today, and I will raise even more at third reading.

Although there are some points I agree with, there are many I do not agree with. I am particularly concerned about the tax hikes, but I will not have time to talk about that issue.

In general, this bill and the government's economic action plan are tainted with a narrow ideology that does not support workers' rights. This ideology would have them control everything, even when the Supreme Court tells the government it cannot do something, as was the case with the securities commission.

This budget is not designed to stimulate the economy. Instead, it is designed to transform Canada into the Conservatives' vision for Canada. This is not a budget for Canadians. It is a budget for the Conservatives.

We will vote for Canadians and we will vote against this budget.

●(1840)

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a couple of quick questions. I know that the hon. member is from Quebec. He spent a lot of time talking specifically about Quebec. I am wondering if that is the start of a trend we are hearing from the Liberal Party. It is speaking about Quebec and somehow separating it from the rest of Canada, thereby pitting one region against the other. Is that something it will continue to do?

Because the member comes from Quebec, I wonder if he might also elaborate a bit on the attitude of Quebecers with respect to reducing taxes for families and businesses. Do they feel as we do in the rest of our ridings and my riding that it helps actual job creation? At committee, we heard from an industry that is very important to the province of Quebec, the video gaming industry, about how important the tax cuts were to stimulating the creation of hundreds of thousands of jobs in that industry.

I am wondering if tax cuts are important to the people of Quebec. Are they helping to invest in and create jobs in this economy? Will we continue to see this pitting of one region of the country against another by the Liberals?

Mr. Massimo Pacetti: Mr. Speaker, the member asked a lot of questions, and I will try to address as many of them as I can.

My focus was mainly on a pro-Conservative movement. We have la Chambre de commerce du Montréal métropolitain. My speech was based on that.

The Conservatives seem to think that they have everybody on board. I am talking specifically about Quebec because I happen to be a Quebec member. It has nothing to do with pitting one region against the other. The member should read some of my declarations. I tabled a private member's bill that proposed to provide tax incentives to Canadians to travel across this country so they can get to know one another, and all of the Conservatives voted against it. Most Conservatives, not just the member across the way, could learn a lesson or two about how Canadians can learn about each other.

Most of my notes that referenced the cuts to le fonds des travailleurs are in a paper published by the Montreal chamber of commerce, which is a pro-Conservative movement. It said that it is a totally bad idea when 85% of the funds that are utilized by the Fonds du solidarité come from the province of Quebec.

●(1845)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to my Liberal Party colleague.

It is clear that the Conservatives are going after investment funds, such as the Fonds de solidarité FTQ. They are also going after this country's caisses populaires. We do not understand how the Conservatives can go after financial institutions that play an important role in the return to prosperity we all want, in light of the disastrous few years we have experienced under the Conservatives.

What does my colleague think about these attacks on the institutions that promote investment, such as caisses populaires and investment funds? Why does he think the Conservatives are attacking these institutions that are so important to the Canadian economy?

Mr. Massimo Pacetti: Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank the hon. member for Burnaby—New Westminster, British Columbia, whose French is excellent and whose question was even better.

I addressed two or three subjects in my speech. One of them was the cuts to the labour-sponsored funds tax credit. I wanted to point this out because it appeared in a report indicating that all the chambers of commerce opposed those cuts, even though most of them support the Conservatives. Thus, we do not understand why they want to cut a program supported by Conservatives, except the Conservatives who sit in the House. It is completely unacceptable.

As for the change to tax credits for credit unions, that is also unacceptable, because we see the growth across the country. Credit unions have always been very popular in Quebec, and this has always been good for attracting investment and money from individuals. Once again, it is completely unacceptable.

I do not know if we can say that this bill is bad for all Canadians, but it is certainly bad for Quebecers.

Government Orders

[English]

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to speak to Bill C-60 at report stage, the government bill that would implement the legislative aspects of the government's budgetary plan.

What I have been hearing from the constituents in Wellington—Halton Hills, the riding I represent, is that their number one priority remains economic growth and job creation.

I have talked to hundreds of constituents over the last six months or so on my drives back to the riding, and called them and asked them what their priorities are, over the last half year. Consistently, they have said that they want to see the government remain focused on economic issues, that they are still concerned about job creation and economic growth. I am happy to say that this budget would deliver on those concerns.

I think it is useful to take a step back from the immediate events that have taken place in the last year and take a bit of a broader perspective on the budget.

Since September 2008, the world has changed. It is clear that the global recession that hit us is still with us in many respects. Even though the contraction of economic growth is there globally, many of the aftereffects of that recession that took place in the aftermath of September 2008, in the summer of 2009, are still with us today. Canada has weathered those after-effects better than most other advanced economies in the world. I think it is useful to take a look at what happened over the last five or six years, to put things into perspective.

In 2009, the IMF said it would be the first time since the 1930s that the global economy would actually contract. South of the border, in the United States, we saw a housing market that underwent a severe correction, affecting many homeowners.

In Europe, we saw the crisis that is still unfolding, a eurozone crisis of skyrocketing unemployment. In fact, I think the most recent figures for the eurozone show eurozone unemployment reaching a new high of about 12%. We have unemployment in Spain hitting 25%. Youth unemployment is almost double that level. We had a sovereign debt crisis about a year ago in Greece that almost led to a solvency problem. We have had ongoing austerity measures, deep austerity measures, that have taken place in the rest of the eurozone.

However, we in Canada have managed to escape the worst of some of those aftereffects. I think it is because the government, in late 2008 and early 2009, realized that we had to do things differently. We came forward with an economic action plan. This budget would build upon those economic action plans of the last five or six years.

I think the proof is in the evidence. The proof is in the empirical data. The fact is that since the recession, the global recession and the recession here in Canada, ended in the summer of 2009, more than 950,000 net new jobs have been created. Contrary to many people's misperceptions, most of those jobs have been full-time, 90% of them, and most of those full-time jobs have been good, highly skilled and highly paid jobs.

Do not take it just from me. Take it from the IMF and the OECD, which have said that this year Canada will lead the G7 in economic growth. In fact, the World Economic Forum has rated Canada's banks as the soundest in the world for the last four or five years.

Clearly, our plan has been working. It has been working, in part, because of the government's actions through its budgets of the last four years or five years. It has worked, in part, because of actions taken by Canadians and the Canadian private sector.

I think it would also be useful to take a step back and take a look at this budget as one would review a set of financial statements. There has been a lot of talk about our deficits, about our debt to GDP ratios, about the government's taxation policy.

However, if we break down the budget, the government's budget, the government's financial position is a set of three financial statements. Look at the cash flow, look at the balance sheet and look at the profit and loss statement. I think there again we can say that Canada is in an excellent position.

In terms of our cash flow, clearly, we have no problems in servicing the national debt we have. In fact, I just checked on the quotes today. The Canada 10-year bond is trading at just above 2% yield. That yield is at almost a record low level. Never in the last 40 or 50 years have we seen the Canada 10-year bond trade at such a low yield.

● (1850)

Why is that? It is because investors want to buy Canada bonds. They have faith and confidence in the financial plan of the government, and there is high demand for these bonds, which indicates a great deal of investor confidence and investor faith in the government's financial plan.

The fact that all the major rating agencies have once again reaffirmed the Canada bond Triple-A rating is also proof that, from a cash flow perspective, we have nothing to worry about.

From a balance sheet perspective, our debt to GDP ratio is currently about 33%. If we look back at the history of our debt to GDP ratio, it has not been this low since the mid-1960s. In the period from the mid-1960s to the mid-1980s our debt to GDP was at or below 33%, and we would have to go back much further, back to the first 20 years of the 20th century to see Canada's debt to GDP ratio at that level.

If we take our debt interest to GDP ratio, there again it has not been this low since the early part of the 20th century, so from a balance sheet perspective, we are also in great shape.

If we look at the government's budgetary plan as a profit and loss statement, this year's deficit is projected to be \$19 billion. That represents 1.2% of our GDP, the lowest in the G7. There again, it is an excellent figure.

Government Orders

As we have committed many times, we will eliminate this deficit by 2015-16. In fact, in the fiscal year 2015-16, we project a slight budgetary surplus, and we have done this despite the fact that over the last six years since coming to power, the government has significantly reduced personal and corporate income taxation in this country, and we have committed to balancing this budget without raising corporate or personal income taxes.

From a cash flow perspective, from a balance sheet perspective, from a profit and loss perspective, the government's budgetary plan is working and it is prudent.

I would also like to highlight specific measures in the budget. We have the Canada jobs grant, which would be built on the expiry of the labour market agreements that have been negotiated with the provinces and are to expire next year, in 2014.

Clearly, when we look at the macro unemployment picture in this country, we see we have regions of significantly higher unemployment and regions of significantly lower unemployment—in fact, one would argue, naturally zero unemployment in some parts of the country—and we need to better match labour market demand with unemployed Canadians who are looking for work. The Canada jobs grant is precisely the plan that would help us match employers with Canadians who want to work.

Another significant aspect of this budget that I want to highlight is the record-setting investments that the government would make over the next 10 years in infrastructure. In fact, total federal outlays for infrastructure, beginning in 2014-15, would be \$70 billion over that 10-year period. That is a record amount of infrastructure money that this government would commit to, which would flow to municipalities and provinces, to help build the infrastructure requirements of tomorrow.

Finally, I want to highlight the fact that we are also very focused on job creation and economic growth, especially for Canada's small to medium-sized businesses. That is why we would extend the hiring credit for small businesses. That is why we would create a fund of \$60 million over the next five years to help incubator and accelerator organizations, and that is why also we would create an advanced manufacturing fund to help manufacturers in southern Ontario who have borne the brunt of the recession.

In sum, this is a good budget, a budget I support. I encourage other members in the House to acknowledge some of the good aspects of the budget. I do not expect them to support it, being in opposition, but I do think that some of the good work the government has done over the last number of years that would be carried on in this current budget needs to be acknowledged. It has put Canada in an enviable position in the G7 and in the OECD, and I encourage members on both sides of the aisle to acknowledge that good work and commend the government for it.

•(1855)

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his overview. He had some good points underlining where we stand on the balance sheet, but I have some problems with some of the assumptions he made in his comments. He made it sound as if we are doing well and have done well through the 2008 period because of the government's policies.

In fact, it was in spite of many of the people who sit on the front bench, not because of them, that we are doing well. He should remember well when there was a push to merge banks, to deregulate. We would have seen the disaster we have seen south of the border to some extent if that had happened, and we withstood the 2008 storm primarily because our banks were capitalized and we did not deregulate and allow these kinds of financial products to come about. I think he should acknowledge that.

He should also acknowledge that there is almost half a trillion dollars not being invested, which was Mr. Carney's point, of course. Where is the plan to get money moving and invest to create jobs, and would he not acknowledge the point I made about the push to merge and deregulate?

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Speaker, in hindsight, I agree with the member opposite that for the government of the day to ensure that the widely held rule remained in place to prevent any single shareholder from taking over a bank or potentially merging two banks into one was the right thing to do. It has helped us avoid the worst of the excesses of some of the large global financial institutions that we saw south of the border, in the United Kingdom and elsewhere, so I think that the maintenance of the widely held rule is a good thing to keep in place and something that I strongly support.

With respect to the member's question about the surplus corporate cash remaining on the sidelines, the most powerful tool that we have right now to encourage Canadian and foreign corporations resident in Canada to deploy their money in the markets is what the U.S. fed is doing. Ben Bernanke and the U.S. fed have deployed quantitative easing. That far and away overshadows anything that this government could do in cajoling and encouraging private sector companies to deploy their cash and put it into productive economic growth.

•(1900)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's comments acknowledging that it was the Chrétien government that ensured that we did not move toward a deregulation of the banking industry and that as a direct result, 10 years later, we were able to manage our banking industry as banks around the world started to default.

The question I have for the member is with respect to infrastructure dollars. The member said that we have record high amounts of infrastructure dollars that are going to be spent or committed by the government. What I take exception to is his describing it as a record amount of money. We are talking about a 10-year period of time. The vast majority of that record amount is being allocated post-2015 election.

My question to the member is this: why should Canadians believe the government to be sincere when most of that infrastructure dollar spending would occur after the next federal election?

Government Orders

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Speaker, my understanding is that Mr. Chrétien was opposed to the bank mergers but Mr. Martin was very much in favour of them. I heard that through people who were very directly related to that situation, so clearly there was a vigorous debate within the government of the day about what was to be done. In fact, those were probably the cues taken to the senior bank executives when they announced in Toronto that they would merge. They probably got signals from Finance Canada at the time, which was then headed up by finance minister Paul Martin, that it was okay to merge. However, clearly someone higher up in the government, the prime minister, had different ideas, and that is why those mergers were not allowed to proceed.

With respect to the government's 10-year plan for infrastructure, we can bank on the fact that the government has delivered a record-setting amount of infrastructure funding over the last five years. We can bank on the government's past actions as a predictor of its future intention with respect to this 10-year plan that starts in 2014.

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleagues, who are going to be holding the government's feet to the fire tonight on what the Conservatives call an economic action plan. It was supposed to be a budget; many people said after it was announced by the finance minister that they were still waiting for the budget.

I want to begin my comments by referring to some of the problems with the budget from 2012.

I will go back to November 2012, when there was this interesting interplay between the President of the Treasury Board and the PBO. The government had laid out the idea that it was going to find 70% of the savings it had booked by finding efficiencies in government. That was fine. The only problem was it did not provide the evidence, and we all know what happened after that: the Parliamentary Budget Officer had to take the government to court.

I have started my comments by providing this background because if the government is going to put assumptions into the budget that have to do with savings and it is going to show Canadians that they can trust it, then it should be able to show parliamentarians, and indeed the Parliamentary Budget Officer, where it is going to find those savings. It should not make general sweeping comments.

This is not new, though. I remember having the same problem three budgets ago. Three budgets ago, the government was talking about selling off capital assets and finding savings to meet its budgetary requirements. In fact, it was not able to do that.

The problem was that the government had not identified where it was going to sell off those assets. It just had some general ideas.

This is a continuing problem with the Conservatives. Over time, when they make assumptions that they are going to find savings but do not identify where the savings are, it catches up to them. We saw that with the government's forecasts for deficits and growth, but most importantly in the budgetary numbers, which is what we are discussing.

When the budget came forward—or the economic action plan, as Conservatives call it—we did not get details. In fact, some commented that the only important parts of the economic action

plan were the first four pages and the final pages, and everything in between was fluff and propaganda.

Those are not my words, but I agree with them. The government is trying to fool people by putting out announcements and pronouncements, to the point where we do not even call it a budget any more.

I suppose there is some truth in advertising, because it is not a budget as we normally understand a budget to be. Normally a budget will lay out financial aspirations and give some evidence of where the savings are going to be found and what programs are going to be invested in.

One example that has really irritated a lot of people in my riding and across the country, particularly young people, is the Canada job grant. If we were to watch our televisions tonight and see the government's ad, we would think that right now there is a program for young people called the Canada jobs grant. In fact, we would be very disappointed if we picked up the phone the next day and tried to contact someone to avail ourselves of this program, because it turns out that this program that the government has made a lot of fanfare announcing does not exist. It is predicated on agreements that have not happened yet. We have a government now that has to get agreement from the provinces, which is no small task, and then the rollout may happen.

With regard to youth unemployment, right now the government is telling young people to just trust it because it has a program for them. If they pick up the phone to try to get help, there is no one on the other end. That is indicative of this budget. What we get is a lot of hack.

The government's credibility is suffering not just because of what we have seen in the last couple of weeks with the scandals in the other place but also in its actual currency in being able to tell Canadians exactly where it is going to find savings and exactly what programs will exist for young people.

On top of that, as if advertising programs with great fanfare and making people believe they actually exist was not bad enough, there are other pieces of legislation—because that is what the government does—that should not be in the budget at all, in particular the amalgamation of CIDA into the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

● (1905)

Bringing CIDA under the umbrella of foreign affairs is a very important exercise. At committee we asked officials when they found about this merger. They were told basically the day of the budget. We asked who was consulted on this merger. It turns out it was not really anyone. It looks like the Conservatives had a conversation among themselves.

I say that because when other jurisdictions have done this—the U.K., the U.S.—they took the time to consult within government to start with. It turns out that if public servants have been working on international development and foreign affairs for most of their careers, one would think they would be good sources for consulting on the changes we are about to see with CIDA. One would think we would consult Canadians on this issue, even those who work in international development and diplomacy.

Government Orders

However, that is not the case with the current government, because it does not consult. What is really offensive and undermines the opportunity to see this done well is that it was put into a budget bill. A budget bill is the forecast of what we should be looking at in terms of economic activity and investment, but Conservatives put the merger of departments into a budget bill. Why? It is because they have done it before and they think that is the way to do business.

If this were even contemplated in the U.K. or the U.S., it would be laughed at. Officials had better go to either the White House, the Pentagon, et cetera, or in the case of the U.K. to cabinet, with a plan. In the case of the U.K., when the merger occurred, there was actually a white paper on it. People were consulted. It was in the platform of the government of the day.

In the case of the United States, people consulted widely. Ms. Clinton, as Secretary of State, went out and put together different groups that did the work speedily until the job was done. However, with the Conservative government, people find out the day of the budget, with no consultations.

Now we are hearing that a transition team is in place, but officials on the transition team have to wait for a budget to be passed. They then have to scratch their heads and wait for the minister to give direction. By the way, the people they work with are wondering how this is going work, but the officials cannot tell them. Why? It is because Conservatives did not bother to even consult.

With regard to CIDA, people are concerned about the money that CIDA will bring to the table and where it is going to go. They are worried about the mandate, because in this legislation they do not have the language that most people would like to see, the language in the official development assistance legislation that focuses on the reduction of poverty or poverty eradication. Instead the mandate is to follow Canadian values.

I am not sure Canadians feel a lot of comfort when they see the way the government interprets Canadian values. According to the Minister of Foreign Affairs today, our Canadian values mean not signing on to the arms trade treaty because somehow there is a conspiracy that the whole world is involved in to bring in gun control that the Conservatives do not like.

Canadian values are in the eye of the beholder. What we need is legislation that will guide international development assistance, but what we see with this economic propaganda plan of the government is that it does not meet the test on numbers. We are still waiting for the government to tell us how it is going to make its savings from the previous budget, which we do not have, and I am sure every Conservative knows that. We are now waiting for the government to tell us how we go forward with that problem. We do not have numbers from the previous budget in going forward to 2013. As well, we have pieces of legislation such as the merger of CIDA into foreign affairs as an add-on, without contemplation, without consultation, without a plan.

I have just started. I started with the fact that it seems to be a shell game, a *Fantasia* for young people. At the end of the day, what we have is not a budget. It is not credible, and that is why we will not be supporting it.

● (1910)

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the hon. member might comment a bit further. The NDP member for Laval earlier said that he thought a number of the items in Canada's economic action plans were actually very good ideas and were needed in the economy at the time. I wonder if there is a bit of disagreement within the NDP with respect to the value of the economic action plans.

Also, I wonder if he might comment on specifics, because again, the member for Laval said that the NDP's position would be to balance the budget without making cuts. However, I have not heard any specifics on how it would do that. Are the New Democrats specifically talking about increasing taxes to do that? Where would they be increasing taxes? If they are talking about cutting programs, what specific programs are they talking about cutting? What income levels could Canadians expect tax increases on? Are they talking also about increasing the GST, or will it just be a carbon tax? Could he focus his points on whether they are talking about tax increases, and if they have identified those programs they are going to cut, what are they?

Mr. Paul Dewar: Mr. Speaker, the member is having some fun thinking of ways to try to be crafty and find a wedge. The problem is that the member knows that the most recent tax we have had to deal with in the House is called the HST. Some called it the Prime Minister's name sales tax. I do not. This government brought that in. The only taxes we will talk about that have been raised have been from the government. He knows that they are raising taxes in this budget and that he is trying to find a wedge somehow.

What we have said, and we will stand by it, is that when people such as the Parliamentary Budget Officer want to have numbers to show how one might balance the budget, we would, as a government, provide those numbers, not hide from accountability, as he has.

● (1915)

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed the remarks from the member for Ottawa Centre. When he talked about the Canada job grant and that the program does not actually exist, I think that is symbolic of a lot of things in this so-called budget. It is a lot of fiction. What we also have in this so-called budget is a statement from the Minister of Finance that he will balance the books in 2015. It is as if it has already happened when we listen to them, but we know that it is fiction too, because this Minister of Finance has not hit a budget target yet.

My question really relates to the other aspect of the member for Ottawa Centre's critic portfolio, and that relates to CIDA. It definitely should not be in a budget bill. What does the member see as the implications for international development assistance as a result of it being transferred to Foreign Affairs, more for business interests than development interests?

Government Orders

Mr. Paul Dewar: Mr. Speaker, this could be done in a way that is responsible and responsive. The problem is that the government is just throwing it all together and throwing it in the budget.

In responding to the member's question, let me just state what Secretary of State Clinton did. She had a committee representing 16 departments and agencies that were consulted, and they worked on how they were going to change development in that country. In the U.K., they had a white paper process, which as we know, in the Westminster tradition, is a way in which we take a policy, go out and consult and actually lay it out. This government has done nothing, not even with its own employees.

I am deeply concerned that the Conservatives could take what could be a good idea and make it a bad rollout to start with and something I guess the rest of us would have to fix later.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to ask my hon. colleague a question. He gave an excellent speech on CIDA and its merger with the Department of Foreign Affairs.

Since he is the member for Ottawa Centre and might know more than I do about public servants, I wanted to ask him what he thinks of what was revealed in the budget regarding the Treasury Board's political interference in collective bargaining with government employees, particularly employees of crown corporations like the CBC, Canada Post and so on.

Could he comment on the government's interference and meddling in crown corporations' collective bargaining?

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Dewar: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. He is right. There is a lot of concern in this town about the Conservative government. It is not only about its track record but about going forward.

The power grab we see in this budget is interfering not only with the collective agreements but with management. It seems as if the government does not trust the managers of crown corporations, let alone the people who deliver all the public services we rely on.

Mr. Jeff Watson (Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today not only in support of economic action plan 2013 but of Bill C-60, our budget implementation bill.

We come to a discussion about the economic action plan in this bill at a time when our economy is creating job growth in quarter one in 2013 at a very robust 2.5%. There is an adjustment to quarter-four growth last year. We have now had seven consecutive quarters of growth. In total, we have well over 900,000 net new jobs, 90% of them full-time, with 75% to 80% of them in the private sector. All of that is just since July 2009, which was the depth of the recession.

The IMF and OECD have predicted that Canada will experience some of the strongest growth in the G7 projecting out quite a way. We have the lowest overall tax rate on new businesses in the G7. That is a serious competitive advantage for the country. We also have the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio in the G7, by a country mile, as we would say in Essex, or two, in this case. We are headed to pre-recession levels in due course. We have a deficit that has just come in

lower than forecast and a sterling Triple-A credit rating with all of the major credit rating agencies.

Of course, we recognize that when we look to Europe and south of the border, or from where I live, north of the border, to the United States, there is more to do. There are still very real threats in the global economic landscape. That is why we need economic action plan 2013 and why we need to get on with the business of implementing the economic action plan here with Bill C-60.

It is important to put economic action plan 2013 in the context that it builds on previous work we have been undertaking. For those of us in the auto sector, which is where my roots are, we had a national auto strategy in 2008, including the creation of the auto innovation fund. Now we have the renewal of the auto innovation fund after major investments to create jobs.

The growing forward 2 program builds on growing forward 1, which was to strengthen the farm gate. Growing forward 2 is targeted at the food processing industry to get the sector into the export markets and to expand it and create jobs.

We had the original build Canada plan in 2007, which was \$33 billion. Later we had the gas tax fund, which we made permanent just a couple of years ago. The new infrastructure plan in economic action plan 2013 would be long term. Included in Bill C-60 is the fact that we would begin to index the gas tax fund. We lay that program out in the bill.

With respect to a new border crossing between Windsor and Detroit, which is a vital economic lifeline, if we look back at past budgets, we lay aside the funding for the Herb Gray Parkway, which is currently under construction. Those funds allowed us to go ahead and acquire the land on the Canadian side for customs and the toll plaza. In this budget, funds are set aside that will help us begin some land acquisition over there, now that there is a presidential permit on the U.S. side.

We are also building on our elimination of red tape and are streamlining the regulatory regime to spur economic growth. I could go on and on, but I want to focus on a few measures that I think are extremely important. If we look first of all at the Canada job grant, we are tackling the skills mismatch, which is a critical problem we face in the labour market.

Even in Windsor-Essex, where we have had chronically high unemployment for a number of years, we have a machine tool, die and mould sector, for example, in which we have hundreds of jobs that have been open and unfilled. Many of them have been unfilled for as many as six months or more. Why is that? It is because those who may be unemployed in that area, and who may even have good skills, do not necessarily have the appropriate skills.

Government Orders

We know this from experience in Ontario. We can look at the second careers program, which retrained a lot of unemployed workers through the recession and out of it. People were training to be chefs and truck drivers. These are not unimportant jobs, but they are not hitting the labour market as it exists. The great benefit and the beauty of the idea of the Canada job grant is that it would put the employer, who has an actual opening and a plan for short-term training, at the centre of the equation to meaningfully train someone in a specific job to fill that opening. That is a major step forward.

● (1920)

I also like the fact that we are embarking on a major long-term infrastructure plan. That is extremely important for municipalities. As I said earlier, the gas tax fund has been made permanent. In this economic action plan, we did not stop there. We are going to be indexing that fund at 2%, and then in increments of \$100 million.

If members talked to any municipality, including rural municipalities like ours, they would find that this is vital. Municipalities can borrow against it if they want to build a project now, because it is permanent and they know what the transfers will be. They can pool it and wait, if the municipalities choose to do that. They can apply these funds to their own priorities with respect to their local infrastructure.

The government is expanding the categories for the municipalities so that they can do more with that particular funding. Maybe the municipalities have already invested heavily in upgrading their waste water infrastructure, as they have in Amherstburg, and it may be time to move on to something different. Those funds can be used in those ways.

I am surprised that the opposition is not supporting that. Bill C-60 lays out a schedule for indexing and a formula for how that is going to occur. It will be a significant blow to municipalities to find out that not everyone in the House is going to be casting a vote in favour of that.

The economic action plan is also really important because there are a lot of tools for the economy in Ontario, particularly southern Ontario, where I come from. We are still concerned about the economy in Ontario. The provincial government is pursuing high-tax policies that have driven up the cost of electricity, which used to underwrite the strong manufacturing sector in Ontario. Our businesses are grappling with that as they try to function in a global economy.

I am encouraging our provincial counterparts not only to get on board with the Canada job grant, in terms of better retraining, but to follow the example we have been setting with consecutive budgets, including this one, by lowering taxes.

In Bill C-60, we extend the accelerated capital cost allowance for an additional two years. That is critical. It is allowing our auto sector and our food processors in Ontario, which happen to be the largest manufacturing sectors in Ontario, to retool and invest in the equipment they need to not only increase their productivity but to lower their costs over the long term.

We are renewing the auto innovation fund, as I briefly mentioned earlier. It is a critical fund as we look to secure the automotive footprint in North America. I have to say that for a government that

participated on behalf of taxpayers in restructuring Chrysler and General Motors, the auto industry is coming back with pent-up demand. They have a business case that works. A fund like this will allow them to tap in and help with creating jobs for innovative products that are rolling off the assembly line.

We have extended FedDev Ontario an additional five years to help diversify the economy. That is a significant step forward. The creation of an advanced manufacturing fund is going to really help in that regard as well.

The promised overhaul of the National Research Council to commercialize research and development is important to the sector but in a way that is going to allow small and medium-sized businesses that may not be able to develop the in-house R and D capability to access all of this great public infrastructure we have built through successive investments in our science and technology fund. To be able to do that to create jobs is a very good thing.

The one item I want to close with is one that is personally important to me. It is the expansion of the adoption expenses tax credit. Many will know, since my Motion 386 of a couple of years ago and the study on federal support for adoptive parents and children, that this has been an area of passion for me. It would look at families who choose the path of adoption. There would be a recognition in our budget that there are 30,000 children waiting to be adopted in Canada.

● (1925)

This is a measure that would allow some of those costs to be underwritten or subsidized to get more of these children into the loving permanence they need. I encourage the opposition to get behind measures like this and get behind the economy and support Bill C-60.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Essex for that mixed bag of Conservative talking points on Bill C-60.

My question is on the part of his speech that had to do with infrastructure. If possible, I would like the response not to start with “There has never been a government that has done more for infrastructure”, because, really, if the measure the Conservatives are putting forward does not fix the problem, then we are hardly any further ahead.

The program was originally supposed to be for seven years and now the government is extending it to 10 years without doing the math and increasing the amount of money allocated to the program so that the objectives are at least maintained. What is more, most of the money will be spent at the end of the program instead of at the beginning.

Does the hon. member not see that this is basically a cut disguised as a new program?

Government Orders

• (1930)

[English]

Mr. Jeff Watson: Mr. Speaker, I take exception to the degrading tone of the member's intervention. He has brought debate down a level with some of his characterizations about whether they are Conservative initiatives or the rationale behind them.

We put forward a budget in good faith, with lots of consultation, particularly on the infrastructure aspects, with municipalities of all sizes. Bill C-60, which the member opposite, unfortunately, will vote against, would implement the indexation of the gas tax fund. That would be immediate and it sets out the formula going forward for how it would be indexed and increased. Whether it is a small municipality or a large-tier municipality, they are all going to get an instant injection of infrastructure funds that they can put into their priorities right away. I am very sad the New Democrats will oppose that.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member made reference to the need for skilled workers in the province of Ontario. That is not new. I hear it quite often from my Ontario colleagues in the Liberal caucus who are really concerned about the skilled jobs that have not been filled and remain vacant.

There is the provincial nominee program. It is believed that by better utilizing that program and having Ottawa provide more certificates to the province of Ontario, it would better ensure that immigrants coming to Ontario would get some of those skilled jobs. However, that is only one important aspect.

We also acknowledge the importance of ensuring that Canadians, first and foremost, are filling jobs and that educational facilities are provided, whether they are of a provincial nature, in the private sector or those to which Ottawa contributes. Filling those jobs is important. However, specifically with regard to the provincial nominee program, does he believe the province of Ontario should be issued more certificates, something the province itself would like to see?

Mr. Jeff Watson: Mr. Speaker, I am stunned to hear the member has a preference for immigrants filling the labour market than connecting Canadians directly with those jobs. We have under-employed people at home who want to work and are eager to acquire the kinds of skills they need to get into these well-paying jobs. I am stunned. The member will back that up by voting against these measures and the Canada jobs grant.

I appreciate that is what he supports, but I want Canadians who are underemployed and unemployed to acquire the skills training they need. We have seen programs like the second career program that I mentioned earlier. People were being trained, but not necessarily to get them into the labour market. This is going to change the approach by providing employers with short-term plans for training people for the jobs they need filled.

We want to connect Canadians, including Canadians with disabilities, into the labour market so they get the jobs they need to have long-term prosperity.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today on behalf my riding, Sherbrooke, to speak

to Bill C-60. The budget was brought down in March. The budget implementation bill, which is 100 or so pages long this time, followed.

We might say this is a small budget implementation bill compared to the last two, which were 400 pages each. However, if we look at the history of budget implementation bills, we realize that a 100-page bill is still quite voluminous. This approach does not allow parliamentarians to do their job properly and analyze the bill in detail.

In the Conservative government's last two budget implementation bills, there were hundreds and hundreds of pages of measures that were not necessarily related to the budget. Are the Conservatives afraid of public opinion? Is that why they rush to pass measures in a document that is so voluminous that it is hard, even for experts, to see all the details in it? That is my theory, but I think most of my opposition colleagues see it that way as well.

I am somewhat sad to speak to this bill for a number of reasons, including the fact that this budget contains a lot of bad news. It would take a long time to rhyme it all off, but I will mention a few items that affect my riding in my speech.

As the member for Sherbrooke, I am obviously here to talk about the impact that this bill could have on my riding and on the beautiful city of Sherbrooke, the capital of the Eastern Townships. Sherbrooke is a fairly large city that has a population of 160,000 and many needs. I am honoured to serve the city in this House.

I would also like to mention the correspondence that I received from the people in my riding on various subjects. I will talk about those subjects today, since they garnered the most attention from the people of Sherbrooke, even though it may have been for the wrong reasons.

In a question I asked my colleague earlier, I talked about the Treasury Board's political interference in crown corporations' negotiations. In the last budget implementation bill, we learned that the President of the Treasury Board was going to give himself the right to interfere in the business of our crown corporations, for example the CBC. This crown corporation is a fairly well-known entity in the field of journalism, and it must be as independent as possible. It is vital that the CBC, more than any other crown corporation, be independent.

The government would interfere primarily in negotiations with CBC employees, which include journalists. According to many people and even witnesses who came to comment on the budget, this is a direct attack on the CBC, as well as on other crown corporations, such as Canada Post and VIA Rail, and the list goes on.

This measure will make it possible for the Treasury Board to give guidelines to administrators of crown corporations and tell them how they should manage and pay their employees or how they should manage their day-to-day operations. Earlier, I mentioned negotiations with employees of this crown corporation, and then there is the announced \$115 million in cuts to the CBC, which is another Conservative attack on our crown corporation. Unfortunately, that is \$115 million less that the crown corporation has to do its job.

Government Orders

● (1935)

There is another topic that has been the subject of a lot of talk in my riding, and that is the elimination of the tax advantage that was offered by labour-sponsored funds, such as the Fonds de solidarité FTQ and the CSN—the most well-known funds in Quebec.

According to the figures, the government will save \$350 million by eliminating this tax advantage. It will save \$350 million, including \$312 million in Quebec alone. It is no coincidence that we have been hearing from the media and other sources that this is a direct attack on Quebeckers. In Sherbrooke, there is an FTQ office just a few metres away from my office.

Labour-sponsored funds, such as the Fonds de solidarité FTQ, allow the workers who participate in the fund to invest in small and medium-sized businesses. These workers are encouraged to do so because they receive a 15% tax advantage from the federal government. This tax advantage does not exist for other savings plans, such as ordinary RRSPs, which are done through banks. Investors would choose to go through a labour-sponsored fund to make use of the tax advantage. The government now wants to make some gradual cuts. Labour-sponsored funds will no longer be able to offer that advantage. They will unfortunately have to fight even harder with the banks to compete for investors.

The direct investments made in the regions of Quebec through these funds enabled small and medium-sized businesses to start up and helped other businesses to keep jobs. This is really a shame. Many people have reacted to this, and that is why I want to condemn it. I hope that the government will pay close attention to this issue. As I said, there will be negative repercussions, particularly for Quebec, because it is the province with the most labour-sponsored funds.

Another issue that my office has received a lot of correspondence about is the merger of the Canadian International Development Agency, or CIDA, with the Department of Foreign Affairs. People in Sherbrooke are very concerned about this. Like me, they wonder how Canada's economic and trade interests, which fall under the jurisdiction of the Department of Foreign Affairs, can be reconciled with CIDA's humanitarian aid mandate. I hope that CIDA will continue to deliver that aid despite cuts to its budget. How can the two be reconciled? How can the government believe that everything will be fine, that there will be no problem when it merges the two? Many people in Sherbrooke are deeply concerned about this.

Another issue we have been getting a lot of feedback about since the budget was tabled is the higher tariffs on some commercial goods. Countries that want to export their goods to Canada will have to pay higher tariffs that will apply to hundreds of thousands of consumer goods.

As the member for Sherbrooke, it is clear to me that higher tariffs are in fact a new tax, a hidden tax. There is no need to study economics for years to realize that if the cost of exporting goods to Canada goes up, companies will raise the retail prices of the goods they export to Canada. In the end, Canadians will pay more.

Canadians, including the people of Sherbrooke, will have to pay an estimated \$8 billion more because of the Conservatives' tariff increase. That is in addition to higher costs for hospital parking and

the attack on credit unions, such as Desjardins, which is a pillar of the community in Sherbrooke. There is one on nearly every corner. That is yet another thing the Conservatives have taken aim at.

● (1940)

I will be happy to answer my colleagues' questions.

[*English*]

Hon. Julian Fantino (Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am a little bit surprised and somewhat amazed that the hon. member opposite would suggest that \$1 billion of hard-earned taxpayer money going to the CBC should be handed over without accountability and some kind of oversight by this government, which was elected by the people to ensure that their hard-earned dollars are not in any way, shape or form squandered, wasted or otherwise misdirected.

I wonder if the member opposite could explain his value system with respect to how we deal with taxpayers' hard-earned money.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to answer that question.

As chair of the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics, I have dealt with the CBC many times. Indeed, we are conducting a study right now.

It is obvious that the Conservative government is attacking the CBC, and it is also clear that Canada needs the CBC. It is a public broadcaster, like those in many other countries, such as the United Kingdom, Japan and Australia. These countries have public broadcasters. Canada is one of the countries with the lowest costs per capita for what is in our case a crown corporation, the CBC.

This corporation prepares annual reports that are tabled in Parliament. It justifies all its expenditures. It is absolutely necessary for all Canadians to have a broadcaster in both official languages everywhere in Canada, whether they are in northern Ontario, where they can receive services in French, out west, or in eastern Canada. This is crucial, and it is important that this service be maintained as much as possible.

● (1945)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to continue on the member's concluding remarks, in which he talked about the issue of tax credits for credit unions.

Credit unions have been a wonderful alternative to some of the traditional banks, whether in terms of the services they provide or in their locations. In rural communities out west they are exceptionally popular and provide a service that many of the banks have not been able to provide. In my riding of Winnipeg North, the only real growth within the industry has been that of a credit union opening on McGregor Street, whereas we have seen a number of banks actually close.

Government Orders

This budget is going to deal with getting rid of a tax credit on which credit unions have traditionally relied. That will have an impact on our credit unions. The member might want to conclude the remarks he had started just before his time expired.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Winnipeg North for his question, which gives me an opportunity to talk about a point I did not have time to elaborate on.

I mentioned them, but I did not go into detail about credit unions, which, as the member said, are found in almost every riding in this country. They are also economic instruments that fund numerous local projects. Credit unions are important because they are located in small communities and they help those communities by providing funding, by giving back. They are not ordinary banks.

As a Desjardins credit union customer, I wonder why people would opt for a bank when they can use a credit union. We are lucky to have these businesses, which do not put profit first, but also look to help the community. Unfortunately, they are being attacked by the Conservatives.

We were invited to a breakfast meeting with credit unions just last week. We talked, and they were clearly disappointed in the government's attitude and lack of co-operation. They would have liked to maintain their advantage. Unfortunately, that is not going to happen. The Conservatives do not believe that credit unions are important. However, the NDP believes they are very important, and we will support them when we form the government in 2015.

[*English*]

Mr. Corneliu Chisu (Pickering—Scarborough East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak in the House tonight on behalf of my constituents of Pickering—Scarborough East to Bill C-60, the jobs, growth and long-term prosperity act.

As a professional engineer, I highly support the bill, as it would truly provide a concrete foundation addressing real Canadian issues and would build Canada's future economic strength for many years to come, in order to maintain our country as one of the best places in the world to live, raise a family, work and start a business.

My expertise in the engineering profession and service in the army engineers has allowed me to explore this bill from various aspects. Bill C-60 focuses on the well-being of Canadians, and as a member I can assure the House that it includes a variety of measures to implement certain provisions contained in Canada's economic action plan 2013.

My constituents in Pickering—Scarborough East are supportive of Bill C-60 as it addresses some of the key issues that they have been facing.

As we all know, youth have been financially neglected in our system for a long time by previous governments. Canadian youth are struggling to find jobs within their area of study. Our Conservative government has a plan for young Canadians seeking employment in the job market. Our Conservative government understands the needs of today's youth population and has proposed to provide \$18 million in funding in multi-year support for the Canadian Youth Business Foundation to enable the foundation to continue supporting young

entrepreneurs between the ages of 18 and 34. This would not only be an opportunity for young people to grow in their career-oriented horizons but would also help to boost our Canadian economy, leading young Canadians toward innovation.

Just to give an example, the Canadian Youth Business Foundation has worked with 5,600 new entrepreneurs, helping to create 22,100 new jobs across Canada. This plan is working and will work for Canadian youth; they are the leaders of tomorrow. The New Democrats indeed have some ideas, but they are not delivering accordingly to the needs of our Canadian youth.

Furthermore, Canada's temporary foreign worker program needs reform in order to ensure clearly and without doubt that Canadians are given first chance for available jobs. This is an issue that my constituents in the riding of Pickering—Scarborough East are concerned about, and Bill C-60 is addressing it. This program provides employers with access to foreign workers on a temporary basis to assist sectors and areas that experience labour shortages. Reform should ensure that this program is used in the way it was intended and not otherwise.

In this connection, the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act also needs to be amended. It needs to provide authority to revoke work permits issued by Citizenship and Immigration Canada and to suspend and revoke labour market opinions provided by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada if an employer is found to be misusing the program.

In addition, under economic action plan 2013, the Government of Canada announced that it will be introducing user fees for employers applying to hire temporary foreign workers through the labour market opinion process. The government would use existing regulatory authority and would establish authority for a privilege fee in respect of work permits. This would ensure that taxpayers no longer subsidize the cost of processing these applications.

Many constituents in my riding are supporting this amendment, which is designed to avoid abuses of well-intended legislation.

Many newcomers reside in my riding of Pickering—Scarborough East. For these newcomers, becoming a Canadian citizen is a significant milestone, creating stronger bonds to the economic, cultural and social fabric of Canada. I am pleased to see that economic action plan 2013 is aiding in ensuring a flexible and robust citizenship program. I have volunteered and lectured at many citizenship classes in my riding and surrounding ridings, and I am aware of the waiting times and the program's increasing costs.

Government Orders

The citizenship application fee has not been adjusted for almost 20 years. The current \$200 fee only covers 20% of the actual cost to process a citizenship application, which means that our Canadian taxpayers are subsidizing 80% of the actual processing costs. The Citizenship Act would be amended to provide the expanded authority for the Governor in Council to make regulations respecting fees for services provided in the administration of the Citizenship Act and for the waiver of such fees.

● (1950)

The enactments would also provide that the User Fees Act would not apply to fees for services delivered in the administration of the Citizenship Act. This would indeed serve both newcomers and taxpayers, and fix mistakes made by past governments.

Canadians want clean, reliable and safe energy. That is why our Conservative government has proposed, through Bill C-60, amendments to the Nuclear Safety and Control Act.

In my riding of Pickering—Scarborough East, we rely on the Pickering nuclear generating station for safe and clean power. The aforementioned reform would allow the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission to continue to protect the health, safety and security of Canadians and would provide reassurance of Canada's international commitment to the peaceful use of nuclear technology for power production.

The problem right now is that with the current fee structure, payments are collected from licence holders to support regulatory activities that may take place in a subsequent fiscal year. If this is the case, the dues received but not used can result in a lapse at the end of a fiscal year. The legislative amendment would provide the commission with the authority to carry forward unspent revenues collected through licence fees from one fiscal year to the next.

As an engineer, it is easy for me to see that this reform would allow all of my constituents to be assured that their health, safety and security would be protected at all times and that there would be no financial difficulties for the commission in order to do its job to its full ability.

Canadians want concrete actions and ideas on how to keep the economy on track and create jobs and prosperity for their families, not empty statements or promises. That is why our Conservative government introduced economic action plan 2013 to amend parts of the Keeping Canada's Economy and Jobs Growing Act, 2011.

The amendments would allow for a series of increases, starting in 2014-15, to the sum that may be paid under this statute for the purposes of the gas tax fund. Currently that sum sits at \$2 billion a year, and it is proposed that the amount be raised by \$100 million when an underlying calculation, the initial sum of \$2 billion increased annually by 2%, reaches the next \$100 million threshold.

Canada's gas tax fund provides predictable, long-term funding for Canadian municipalities to help them build and revitalize public infrastructure that achieves positive environmental results. More specifically, the fund supports municipal infrastructure projects that contribute to cleaner air or water or to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and fall into the following categories: drinking water, waste water infrastructure, public transit, community energy systems, solid waste management and local roads.

Our Conservative government has put forth logical reforms in Bill C-60 that will make Canada continue to be a beacon of enlightenment, freedom and prosperity the world over.

I rise today to ask all members of this House to join me in voting in favour of this measure so that Canadians can continue to prosper.

The measures I have highlighted today are significant examples of this government's commitment to a strong economy and responsible management in the name of all Canadians. The commitment represents our longer-term view of how we can become more efficient and more prudent with taxpayers' hard-earned money. The steps we take today will indeed give us the tools and strength to withstand challenges that we may face in the near future.

This is why I say that our Conservative government's focus has been planning according to what Canadians are asking us to do, and implementing Canada's economic action plan 2013 through Bill C-60 will achieve exactly that. To me, it is obvious that Canadians from St. John's to Yellowknife to Vancouver Island, including those in Pickering—Scarborough East, will benefit from the policies this bill lays out.

This is a reminder of what we are here to do first and foremost, which is to represent our constituents. Therefore, let us pass Bill C-60 for prosperity. Let us pass this bill not because it helps us sitting in this chamber today, but because Canadians need it. Canada needs this bill.

● (1955)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Raynault (Joliette, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for his speech.

Earlier, we said that will be voting against Bill C-60. We will vote against it because it is an omnibus bill. We also opposed Paul Martin's omnibus bill in the 1990s.

However, I do have a question. I would like to know when the Conservatives will stop haphazardly slashing the budgets of the economic development agencies for Canada's regions.

Government Orders

[English]

Mr. Corneliu Chisu: Mr. Speaker, that is a very good question from my colleague opposite. However, I would like to concentrate on the new building Canada plan. It is a huge plan that is meant to rebuild our infrastructure. Over \$53 billion would be invested in this plan over 10 years: \$32.2 billion over 10 years for a community improvement fund; \$14 billion for the new building Canada fund; \$1.25 billion for the renewal of the P3 Canada fund; and \$6 billion in current infrastructure programs for provinces, territories and municipalities. These are the ideas we have. We are delivering for Canadians. These are our plans and what is expected of us by Canadians.

• (2000)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the last time I asked a Conservative member a question, he chose not to answer it and then distorted the question itself, making reference to the Liberal Party not wanting Canadians to be employed.

That reminded me of what the government has actually done with regard to this particular issue, and that is what my question is about, the temporary foreign worker program. There are 338,000 temporary foreign workers through the government, a record high number. At the same time, there are huge unemployment problems in all regions of Canada, with a particular emphasis on youth. A lot of young Canadians are looking for jobs and yet the government has seen the need for 338,000 temporary foreign workers.

My specific question for the member is this. Does he believe that Canada requires 338,000 temporary foreign workers, or did the government make poor decisions in issuing temporary foreign worker permits or did it mess up on immigration? Which one is it?

Mr. Corneliu Chisu: Mr. Speaker, as members heard in my presentation, the temporary foreign worker permit legislation needs to be improved and we are doing just that in Bill C-60. I cannot say whether we need a certain number, a smaller number or a larger number of temporary foreign workers. We know the temporary foreign worker permit legislation must be fixed so that it is used as it is meant to be used.

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was interested in listening to the intervention by the member opposite. Clearly, he is a believer. He supports his government's budget and this bill. He believes everything that is being said about it, but I would ask him to consider the fact that this budget implementation act changes upwards of 50 different pieces of legislation. It has been suggested by economists, Conservative commentators and the Parliamentary Budget Officer that parliamentarians are not given nearly the information they need in order to make the important oversight decisions because of the implications of the measures that will be passed in this bill.

I appreciate the fact that the member is a believer, but is there not room in the House, the people's chamber, for all members to have the opportunity to properly scrutinize such an important piece of legislation as this?

Mr. Corneliu Chisu: Mr. Speaker, that is a good question, indeed, but I will tell him what the most important thing is. We have to amend this budget. We cannot wait time and time again to implement it. Canadians expect action from us. I would remind the member that

there is the gas tax fund for infrastructure, which is indexed now, and some of the provinces are following our example, like the province of Ontario.

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in the House of Commons to support economic action plan 2013.

This is our government's eighth budget since 2006. Over this period of time, our country has met with some unmatched economic challenges, many of which are beyond our borders. Throughout the life of this government, we have never wandered from our commitment to strengthen the economy for all Canadians and the determination to see our plan through.

[Translation]

Economic action plan 2013 marks the next phase in keeping that commitment to Canadians to create jobs, increase long-term prosperity while keeping taxes low for families and businesses, and balance the budget by 2015.

• (2005)

[English]

Economic action plan 2013 sets out a plan that I know constituents in my riding of Simcoe—Grey will benefit from this year and for years to come. Let me highlight some of the key components.

The economy and job creation remain job one for our Conservative government. That is why our major focus of economic action plan 2013 is connecting Canadians with available jobs and providing them the skills they need to fill those jobs.

To accomplish this, we have a three-point plan on skills training. First, it introduces the new Canada jobs grant that would provide up to \$15,000 or more per person, including a maximum federal contribution of \$5,000, to be matched by provinces, territories and employers. The grant would directly connect skills training with employers and available jobs in the current market.

Second, the plan would create opportunities for apprentices by working with provinces and territories to harmonize requirements for apprentices, and examine the use of practical, hands-on tests as a method of assessment in targeting skilled trades.

[Translation]

Finally, it will provide support to the groups that are under-represented on the labour market, such as persons with disabilities, young people, aboriginal peoples and newcomers, to help them find good jobs.

*Government Orders**[English]*

Our government recognizes the ongoing uncertainty in the global economy. Economic action plan 2013 announced an extension of the temporary accelerated capital cost allowance for new investments in machinery and equipment in the manufacturing and processing sector for an additional two years. This would enable manufacturing and processing companies to plan and invest over the coming years to help create jobs in a sector that was particularly hard hit by the global recession. The 50% straight-line depreciation rate would be extended for two years to include investments in eligible manufacturing and processing machinery and equipment in 2014 and 2015. By allowing a faster writeoff of eligible investments, this measure would provide concrete support to businesses in the manufacturing and processing sector to help them retool, with new machinery and equipment so that they can remain competitive in the current global environment.

What does that mean for manufacturers in Simcoe—Grey, my riding? For companies like Reinhart Foods in Stayner, it would mean significant deductions that would allow them to remain competitive. This government would enable them to continue their manufacturing and processing, and plan and invest over the coming years to help create jobs in my riding.

While job growth remains a key pillar of economic action plan 2013, our government believes that family is the foundation on which Canada rests. We have taken action to support Canadian families year after year.

The Conservative government delivered the children's fitness tax credit to help families with the cost of enrolling their children in activities and sports, as well as the children's arts tax credit. The tax-free savings account is a versatile option for parents and families, whether they are saving for a house or a vacation.

We have cut taxes over 150 times, including cutting personal income taxes and the GST, resulting in the average Canadian family of four saving over \$3,200 a year.

In addition to this, we would also be enhancing the adoption expense tax credit. This government recognizes that strong and stable families are critical to Canada's long-term prosperity. Families provide children with support, community and a sense of well-being, and yet an estimated 30,000 children a year are currently in the care of child welfare agencies in Canada, waiting to be adopted.

The adoption expense tax credit recognizes costs unique to adopting a child. To provide better tax recognition of the costs incurred by those adoptive parents, economic action plan 2013 proposes to allow additional adoption-related expenses, such as fees for provincially required home studies or mandatory adoption courses, to be eligible for the credit.

Families in Simcoe—Grey who wish to adopt, many of whom I know, can now feel a little bit of that weight of adopting a child lifted off their shoulders so that they can commit to doing this. I commend the government for supporting this effort.

In order to encourage charitable giving by new donors, our government introduced the first-time donor's super credit. This tax credit would provide an additional 25% for a first-time donor on up

to \$1,000 in monetary donations. An individual would be considered a first-time donor if neither the individual nor the individual's spouse or common-law partner had claimed the charitable donations tax credit or the first-time donor's super credit in a taxation year since 2007. The super credit could be shared between spouses and common-law partners.

What does this mean for charities in my riding? A first-time donor who gives \$500 to charity would now receive \$285 as a tax credit, versus \$160 before. The super credit would provide an additional incentive to people who donate for the first time to benefit charities like the YMCA in Collingwood, Habitat for Humanity in Wasaga Beach, the Hospice Georgian Triangle or Matthews House in Alliston.

Getting first-time donors on board is often the most costly and challenging part of an equation on getting charitable donations. If we engage young donors and new donors, we can create a culture of giving and that can only benefit all of our communities.

Our government is also streamlining the process for providing tax relief for Canadian Armed Forces members and police officers deployed on international moderate-risk missions. This process would allow the Minister of Finance, upon the recommendation of the Minister of National Defence, or the Minister of Public Safety to designate a mission for purposes of the Income Tax Act. This would replace a lengthy process that delays timely implementation of tax relief for these families.

In my riding of Simcoe—Grey, it is extremely meaningful. For CFB Borden in Simcoe—Grey, where we have stationed thousands of men and women who support and are a part of the Canadian Armed Forces, many of whom spend time away from home on international missions, they would be able to save a little bit more and make things a little bit easier on their families left at home in Canada.

• (2010)

[Translation]

I strongly believe that all of the initiatives I mentioned will help Canada by creating a better standard of living for Canadians today and a more prosperous nation that will continue to be a world leader in the future.

[English]

I strongly believe that all the initiatives I have highlighted today would greatly benefit all the people of Canada by creating a higher standard of living for Canadians today and a more prosperous nation that will continue to be a world leader today and tomorrow.

This government's aim is to deliver the very best to Canadians. I ask all members to support the swift passage of Bill C-60 and to facilitate the implementation of Canada's economic action plan 2013. It would benefit my constituents in Simcoe—Grey and Canadians across the country.

Government Orders

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to my colleague's speech. We are talking about the economy here today as we go through Bill C-60. It is interesting to listen to members on the other side try to paint a rosy picture about what is happening with Canada, but I will point to two key indicators that are worth paying attention to that are not being addressed by the government.

The first is productivity, which has virtually collapsed under the government. Now we are 28th out of 35 comparator countries and it is getting worse under the government. Second, is the R and D investment. The latest Science, Technology and Innovation Council report said we have dropped from 16th when the government took power in 2006 to now 23rd in terms of R and D investment.

I am wondering when the government is going to admit that its plan is not working and Canada has fallen behind.

Ms. Kellie Leitch: Mr. Speaker, this government has created 900,000 net new jobs since the downturn of the recession. This government has provided unparalleled opportunities for jobs for Canadians. Whether that be our 5,000 new internships in economic action plan 2013, or the 36,000 jobs for young Canadians every year through the Canada jobs plan, this is an opportunity for Canadians. I encourage the opposition members to get on board. Let us create jobs for Canadians and make sure that all Canadians have an opportunity to work.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this bill would increase taxes on safety deposit boxes, totalling \$40 million a year, would put new taxes on credit unions, amounting to \$75 million a year, and the list goes on. The good people in my riding do not want the cost of baby carriages to go up 3%, bicycles 4.5%, blankets 5%, ovens, cooking stoves and ranges 3%, plastic school supplies 3.5%, pillows 6% and vacuum cleaners 5%. I have heard from Canadians battling cancer, who must fight their disease every day, that costs of their cosmetic wigs will go up by an astonishing 15.5%. That is absolutely shameful. How is this not a tax?

• (2015)

Ms. Kellie Leitch: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned in my speech, our government has actually lowered taxes more than 150 times since coming into office. The average family of four pays \$3,200 less in tax each year. That means they have \$3,200 in their pockets to spend where they like to spend it, on their families.

I encourage the members opposite to get on board. We lowered the GST. We are lowering taxes on Canadians. We will continue to do that so we can make sure Canadians are successful.

Hon. Lynne Yelich (Minister of State (Western Economic Diversification), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's speech. I found it very interesting. I want to know what the member would like to tell us about the gas tax fund, how important that is to Canadians and how well received it is from coast to coast.

Ms. Kellie Leitch: Mr. Speaker, infrastructure in our country is essential to making sure we can actually grow our economy. In my riding of Simcoe—Grey, we have learned first hand from investments in infrastructure how valuable that is, and that is because of the opportunity for the municipalities in my riding to have access to the funds through the gas tax.

The mayors in my riding, whether they be from Springwater township, Wasaga Beach, Collingwood or the Township of New Tecumseth, all appreciate what our government has done in creating the gas tax and making it permanent so that infrastructure opportunities are available in their local communities.

[Translation]

Ms. Francine Raynault (Joliette, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague talked a lot about family. However, we know that Bill C-60 contains nothing to reduce household debt, which is estimated at 167% of disposable income.

I would like to know how someone can plan for a decent retirement by working an hour away from home at what might be 70% of their salary.

[English]

Ms. Kellie Leitch: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned in my speech, our government has created a number of tax savings options, whether it be the TFSA, which I think is an excellent tool for Canadians to save and then be able to access their funds, or whether that be lowering taxes so Canadians actually have the money in their own pockets and can make their own decisions with respect to it. It is \$3,200 for a family of four. I think that is exceptionally meaningful. We will continue on that track of a low-tax plan.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when the Parliamentary Secretary said they are lowering taxes, she made reference to pockets. What we need to recognize is that a tax is a tax. If they start charging people money to park in a parking lot at a hospital, or charging money as a tariff, that is all money coming into the government's pocket.

Yes, in the other pocket, they might be lowering some of the taxes, but when we net it out and ask how much tax the government has collected versus how much it has cut back or given back to citizens, we will find that the government has actually increased taxes by hundreds of millions of dollars over the last few years. That is the reality. The Conservatives might want to say this is a government that does not believe in taxing people, but in fact the opposite is true.

The reality is that the government has more taxes today and is charging more tax today than it has in the last few years. It continues to grow, just in a different form. The Conservatives need to recognize that.

It is about the economy. Canadians are concerned about our economy. Quite often, we find individuals who have been let go from the manufacturing industry, let us say for the sake of argument, where they were being paid a reasonably well-deserved salary of \$30 an hour. These people find themselves unemployed and, more often than not, we see that they have to readjust. Part of that readjustment often leads to a lower wage.

Government Orders

In fact, the gap between the rich and the middle class is widening. The rich have been able to become richer under the Conservative regime. It is the middle class on whom we need to spend a little bit more time. We appeal to the Minister of Finance to start focusing more on the middle class here in Canada and the types of issue it has to deal with. Those issues may be personal debt, housing or adjusting to the new working environment. That is where the government needs to put a higher priority.

We talked about overall performance, one of the things we really need to be concerned about. I remember a number of years ago, before the Conservatives were in government, back in 2005 or 2006, that we had a huge trade surplus of billions of dollars. When the Conservative government took the reins of power, it took the surplus that was there through the Jean Chrétien and Paul Martin eras and turned it into a deficit.

What is more, the Conservatives like to think they are great traders. The Prime Minister goes to China and brings back a couple of panda bears. Let us contrast that to when former prime minister Jean Chrétien went to China with a team-Canada approach and brought back literally hundreds of millions of dollars of investment. It is a different way of governing. The past has shown that the Liberal Party did exceptionally well in terms of managing the economy. I believe Canadians are starting to recognize that.

The reason the banking industry is doing as well as it is today, which has been pointed out even by Conservative members, is because of good, smart decisions when Jean Chrétien was the prime minister. At the time, we went against what the world was doing in terms of deregulation. We believed we needed to have the status quo in terms of banking back in the 1990s. That was not a popular decision back then, but it was an important decision, and the government today has seen the benefits of that.

One of the first actions the government took in regard to the banking industry was to increase mortgages from 25 years to 40 years.

● (2020)

We addressed the issue in the House, expressed the concerns we had and demonstrated that it was a bad policy. The government had to flip-flop on its position. We applaud the government for changing and reducing it back down to 25 years.

Canadians have priority issues. Is the government really listening? Health care is an important issue from coast to coast to coast. Canadians love and appreciate the health care system we have today. What have we seen from the Prime Minister?

Leaders before him expressed concerns and took action. Pierre Elliott Trudeau brought in the Canada Health Act. He recognized the five fundamental principles of health care, which Canadians believe in today.

It was Jean Chrétien who established a base of health care transfers; in other words, cash going to the provinces. It was that prime minister who stopped the tax point shift, where provinces were shifting their reliance from cash to tax points. That would not have been good for the longevity of health care in Canada. It would have taken more of the federal government's responsibility out of Ottawa and put it into different regions of the country. We believe in a

national health care program. That is why Jean Chrétien took that action.

When Paul Martin was prime minister, we negotiated the health care accord. When Conservative members stand in their place and say their government gives more toward health care than any other government, that is because of Paul Martin and the health care accord that was achieved prior to the Conservatives taking office.

That was a commitment, and we have demonstrated that commitment through different prime ministers in terms of what we believe in with respect to health care. We know it is a high priority for all Canadians.

What has the Conservative government done? The Prime Minister has not even met with the 10 premiers. He has said he will meet with them one on one. If the Prime Minister believes in health care and believes in the important issues Canadians have to face today, then he needs to do a lot more than just pick up the phone and talk to one premier here and one premier there. We need leadership.

A first ministers' conference needs to be held in Ottawa, my home city of Winnipeg or any other jurisdiction. The point is that the Prime Minister needs to sit at the head of the table and work with the different stakeholders, in particular the premiers, working out some agreements that are absolutely critical to Canada's future. He needs to deal with issues like the social health care accord that needs to be renewed. It is not good enough for the Prime Minister to tell the provinces to trust him, that the government will continue to give annual increases. That does not cut it. It is an issue of priorities. What are the government's priorities?

I have seen absolutely no hesitation with respect to money heading over to the department responsible for advertising. Advertising costs have gone through the roof. There is no doubt that all political parties advertise, but their advertisements are not as partisan as those put out by the Conservative government. We have huge student unemployment. We could hire 30-plus students for summer jobs with one 30-second ad on this so-called economic action plan.

The Conservative government spends an enormous amount of tax dollars in areas in which it is not necessary. At a time when the Conservative government is cutting back on the civil service, it has decided to have more members of Parliament. The government had a choice. It chose to have more elected members of Parliament as a priority and cut back on the size of the civil service. What kind of priority is that? The residents of Winnipeg North do not want the Minister of Finance to create more members of Parliament at a time when the Conservatives are cutting back on civil servants. It does not make any sense.

● (2025)

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am sure all Conservative members appreciated that trip down memory lane where we got to learn about the Liberal government.

For 13 long years Canadians had a Liberal government. Then the Liberals went from a majority on that side of the House, down to a minority official opposition, down to the window seats at the end because they lost the trust of Canadians.

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The member talked about health care. One of the things the Liberals did was cut \$25 billion in health care transfers to the provinces. They downloaded those tax cuts onto the provinces.

Perhaps the member could explain for Canadians how they were so wonderful for the health care system when Canadians rejected that government, rejected its cuts to the program and indeed looked forward to our agenda at the end of this decade where we had \$40 billion in health care transfers, the greatest amount ever transferred to the provinces for health care.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, it is interesting. The member makes reference to the social transfer cuts. When those cuts were made, it was the current Prime Minister who said that the government of the day did not go far enough, that the cuts should have gone deeper. We always have to put things into perspective of time. That is the same administration that provided the current government its budget surplus.

There are many different policies throughout those 13 years that improved the quality of life for all Canadians, that gave people a reason to be optimistic that there was a government that had a national dream of being able to fulfill programming, of being able to deliver real economic opportunities and making a far greater contribution than the current government has.

The member needs to reflect. If he wants to compare the 13 years of Liberal administration versus the seven years of Conservative administration, I would welcome the opportunity to do that comparison at any time. We might have to get leave in order to facilitate the time necessary for us to give just explanation in the details that would be required.

• (2030)

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am quite surprised, stunned actually, by the member for Winnipeg North's lack of memory. I lived through the Liberal regime. What we saw was massive slashing in health care funding and closed hospitals right across the country.

For the first time, we saw thousands of homeless people because the Liberals destroyed the national housing program. We continue today to be the only country in the G20 that does not have a national housing program.

We had the corruption and scandals of the sponsorship program. We saw, repeatedly, a government that was arrogant and simply ignored the needs of ordinary working families.

I do not know what planet the member for Winnipeg North was on during the Liberal regime. I can tell members, from an ordinary Canadian's perspective, it certainly was one of the worst periods in Canadian history. Tragically, it has been maintained and enhanced by the Conservative government.

The member did not actually speak to the budget document at all, but I want to speak to him about Investment Canada. Under the Liberals, every potential takeover was rubber-stamped. The Liberal leader supported the takeover of Nexen by CNOOC.

Do the Liberals also support all of the exemptions that the Conservatives are bringing in under Investment Canada?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, it is incredible that the member would take that sort of attitude. All we really need to do is reflect in terms of the absolute and total incompetence of the administration of health care under the NDP administration in the province of Manitoba.

If we want to talk about where money is wasted, take a look at the regional health care authorities that the Government of Manitoba, the NDP administration, funnels. The largest increases in health care today in the province of Manitoba are through regional bureaucracy.

The New Democratic Party in government talked about getting rid of waiting times, waiting lists, getting people out of the hallways in emergencies and did nothing. It absolutely failed in being able to materialize on that.

The Liberals do not need to take any lessons at all from the New Democrats in terms of delivering health care, because the Liberal Party's record is far greater—

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate, the hon. member for Don Valley West.

Mr. John Carmichael (Don Valley West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to rise tonight in support of Bill C-60, the budget implementation act.

It is important to begin with a level set, and that is that our government thrives on three foundational principles: job creation, economic growth and prosperity for all Canadians. That has been reinforced over the past couple of years, with 900,000 net new jobs established since the recession. Since taking office, our government has lowered taxes 150 times and reduced taxes for families by an average of \$3,200 per Canadian family. Those are significant numbers because they speak to Canadians keeping more of their hard-earned money in their own pockets to save and spend as they choose, not as government dictates.

In economic action plan 2013, we are introducing tax relief for new manufacturing machinery and equipment, extending the temporary accelerated capital cost allowance for new investment in machinery and equipment in the manufacturing and processing sectors for an additional two years, to include investment in eligible equipment in 2014 and 2015. This will result in \$562 million in tax relief to create jobs and grow companies. As a former business person in small and medium-sized businesses, I understand what it takes to establish savings in businesses to allow them to reinvest in equipment, plant and people. This measure is all about that.

I would like to quote the Ontario Liberal minister of finance, Charles Sousa, who stated, "I welcome the opportunity accelerate the capitalization and depreciation of some of their capital spend. That is going to provide further incentive for those investments. What is going to be positive is that we'll have more investment and, of course, for Ontario, we're the largest manufacturing sector in Canada. This is welcome news".

In my riding of Don Valley West, in the heart of Ontario, that is an important factor and it is interesting to hear that from the provincial finance minister as validation of that measure.

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Through economic action plan 2013, we are also closing tax loopholes, which would reinforce the integrity of our tax system. This is an important measure because it would help in our focus to balancing the budget and keeping taxes low for Canadians. We have heard lots of debate on this issue over the past day or so. Closing tax loopholes, while inconvenient to some, is important in helping to achieve our overall goals.

Supporting small Canadian business is something that economic action plan 2013 takes very seriously. We have proposed a number of key measures to support business, including extending and expanding the temporary hiring credit for small business for one year. Approximately 560,000 small businesses will benefit from this measure, allowing them to reinvest approximately \$225 million in 2013.

We are increasing the lifetime capital gains exemption to \$800,000, from \$750,000, in 2014 and indexing it going forward. The lifetime capital gains exemption increases the rewards of investing in small businesses and making it easier for owners to transfer their family businesses to the next generation of Canadians.

In Canada, in excess of 90% of businesses are small or medium sized. Often, they are family owned and operated and succession is an important part of what they thrive on. Families like to see their businesses maintained by their families so their families can prosper and the next generations can also grow and develop under that culture. This initiative, the lifetime capital gains exemption, would help to ensure that value is maintained.

Under our government's low-tax plan for Canada, typical small businesses with taxable incomes of \$500,000 have seen their tax bills drop by over 34%, or \$28,600, since we were elected in 2006. There are lower corporate income taxes. In fact, in Canada today under the finance minister, we have the lowest corporate income taxes in the OECD. That is a further incentive and opportunity for businesses to thrive and prosper.

• (2035)

Again, I would like to read from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the CFIB, which states, "There is a surprising number of measures for small and medium-sized companies in this particular budget. They have expanded the lifetime capital gains exemption to \$800,000. That is very good news. That will help a lot of entrepreneurs. The accelerated CCA will help not just large companies but small, especially in the manufacturing sector, and we think the Canada job grant actually has some real potential".

The CFIB is a voice for small business in our country. I know, as a business person, we had a lot of respect for it in our business. I often spoke to it to find out the pulse of small business and how it felt about the economy and its businesses.

I spent a lot of time talking with small businesses as a member of the industry committee. I welcome our government's efforts to promote small Canadian business. Our government values the contribution of small businesses to the success of the Canadian economy. We will continue to support and encourage growth in this important sector.

Another area we have talked about today and have heard quite a bit about is the Canada job grant. I held a business round table in my

riding of Don Valley West just this past Friday. I had a number of very successful business people come to that breakfast to talk about what they felt was a wonderful opportunity in the Canada job grant in to help to train and develop new workers and to help existing workers improve their skill sets.

The Canada job grant itself is a partnership between the federal and provincial governments and the particular business. It is important to have that partnership in place where businesses will partner with government to ensure they have a stake in getting that employee retrained.

At its full implementation, we will see 130,000 Canadian workers who need to find work to improve their skills access to that training each year. We have heard a lot of points of interest today on the Canada job grant being advertised. However, the reality is that this government, under our Prime Minister and our Minister of Finance, is delivering incentives to cause businesses to help develop their people to make them longer term, better employees by helping them increase their skill sets.

A number of consultations will be held across the country to discuss the development of the Canada job grant. I mentioned mine last week where my constituents were blown away by the program and stressed the importance of the Canada job grant being advertised, particularly so it would reach high school students. It is interesting that we are talking about whether the advertising is premature or not. People in my riding are saying that we have to get the word out to high school and university students so as soon as they graduate, they know there is an opportunity for them and companies are willing to invest in their development.

The new building Canada plan makes investments into Canada's public infrastructure to create jobs, economic growth and provide a high quality life for families in every city and community across the country. The new building Canada plan has three foundational principles.

First is the community improvement fund, which is a \$32 billion infrastructure investment focused on municipalities. This will build roads, public transit, recreational facilities and other pieces of community infrastructure across Canada that will improve the quality of life of Canadian families.

Second, the new building Canada fund will contribute \$14 billion in support of major economic infrastructure, projects that have national and regional significance.

Third is the renewed P3 Canada fund, which is \$1.25 billion to continue finding innovative ways to build infrastructure projects faster and provide better value for Canadian taxpayers through public-private partnerships.

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These are just a few of the opportunities in budget 2013, the economic action plan. I encourage the opposition to get on side. Let us get this voted through as soon as possible so these initiatives can be put into place for the benefit of all Canadians.

● (2040)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the speech by my colleague from Don Valley West, and I have to say that he raised a number of topics related to the economy that we could debate. That is even the purpose of tonight's debate.

Why does the government not make a budget bill, instead of an omnibus bill that includes all kinds of things that they refuse to talk about tonight?

For example, no one has been able to explain to me how the President of the Treasury Board's interference in negotiations at crown corporations can help our economy. There are many more examples, such as issues related to citizenship, the merger of CIDA and the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, and so on.

Why does the government never talk about the 50 acts that were slipped into this budget implementation bill? Why are government members suddenly talking only about infrastructure and a few topics that would ultimately be worth debating?

● (2045)

[*English*]

Mr. John Carmichael: Mr. Speaker, we are speaking to the budget bill, because we are trying to get it passed. It is very simple and straightforward.

The member opposite asked why the President of the Treasury Board is paying attention to investments in crown corporations. That is taxpayer money, and it is significant taxpayer money. As a business manager, when I manage my own business and I look at what the President of the Treasury Board has under his direct responsibility, yes, we should be paying attention to crown corporations. We should know where we are investing taxpayer dollars and ensure that they are being well invested and well cared for.

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wanted to raise a few points and ask my colleague from Don Valley West if he would take them back to the business round table he struck in his riding some time ago and ask the people there how they might react.

I am not sure if he has informed his business round table that the government has spent just over \$600 million in advertising in the last six years. It spent \$29 million to produce and put up 9,000 billboards. It has even begun advertising, which has never been seen in Canadian history, for programs that do not exist, training programs that have not even been negotiated with the provinces.

How would the member justify this to his business round table members? Could he actually look a small-business owner in the eye and justify this kind of expenditure, when we know, for example, that tonight, during playoff hockey, the government is spending just

under \$100,000 for every 30-second advertisement? That would buy 14 insulin pumps for needy Canadians with diabetes or would produce 40 summer jobs for unemployed students. Can the member explain to the owners of small and medium-sized businesses in his riding how this has come to be?

Mr. John Carmichael: Mr. Speaker, we had a very robust discussion in that round table. The participants wanted to understand more about government funding and the number of different initiatives that are presented within this budget. I was able to address many of them, the Canada job grant being one. It would be a tremendous incentive to businesses to train and develop someone. I have been a business person. I understand what it costs to train somebody new or to help redevelop existing employees to increase their skill sets. I understand that the Canada job grant would clearly provide the tools to help get that accomplished. Therefore, it is being advertised today. It is not there, because we have not passed the bill, but it is soon to be.

To the member opposite's position on the cost of advertising, we know that while we are spending a lot of money, we are still spending 40% less than that party spent in its last year of operations. Our money is being well spent. We are spending it responsibly. I thank the member for his question.

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure to rise today on Bill C-60, economic action plan 2013 act, no.1.

As we know, Canada's economic action plan is working. Just this past Friday, Statistics Canada announced that the Canadian economy grew by 2.5% in the first quarter of 2013. This represents the strongest quarterly growth in nearly two years. Additionally, Statistics Canada positively revised its economic growth in the fourth quarter of 2012 up from 0.6% to 0.9%. This is the seventh straight quarter of positive growth in Canada, which is another sign that our economy is on the right track. Additionally, of the over 900,000-plus net new jobs created in Canada since the depth of the global recession, over 90% are full-time, and nearly 75% are in the private sector, which represents the best job-growth record in the entire G7.

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Bill C-60 includes a number of measures that were in the economic action plan. They include reforms to the temporary foreign worker program that would ensure that Canadians are always given the first crack at available jobs. It would introduce a new temporary first-time donor super credit for first-time claimants of the charitable donations tax credit. We have reaffirmed our government's plan to proceed with the sale of Ridley Terminals in British Columbia. We would formally establish the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development to better align Canada's foreign diplomacy, trade and development efforts. We would improve benefits for Canadian veterans through changes to the war veterans allowance, which would result in over 3,100 veterans being eligible for this allowance for the first time. In addition, an estimated 5,350 veterans and survivors would benefit from the change. We would support high-quality value-added jobs in important sectors of the Canadian economy, such as manufacturing, by providing tax relief for new investments in manufacturing equipment. We would provide better support for job-creating infrastructure in municipalities across Canada by indexing the gas tax fund and would keep taxes low for hard-working Canadian families and job-creating businesses.

I want to expand on a few items I just mentioned as well as some additional items in Bill C-60.

The adoption expense tax credit is a great measure included in Bill C-60. It would better recognize the costs associated with the adoption process.

I am the father of an eight-year-old son, and it is a privilege for my wife and I to raise him. There are many others in this country who have chosen to expand their families through adoption. I think of my own family and friends who have done that. I think of the member for Essex, who has been a national leader on the importance of adoption and the recognition of the expenses families incur when they choose to make that addition. No value can be placed on what a new child brings to each family, but we want to make sure that we recognize the costs earlier in the process. This would be a great measure that would apply to adoptions finalized after 2012.

The first-time donor super credit is something we would bring in to encourage young Canadians, primarily, and those who have not given before to a non-profit organization, to do so.

I think of some of the great local charities in my riding of Chilliwack—Fraser Canyon, such as the Meadow Rose Society, which provides care for single moms in low-income families who do not have the necessities, such as formula and diapers, to provide for their young babies. Some of us may take these for granted, but they represent a significant cost. The Meadow Rose Society is there to help those moms in Chilliwack. This is an example of an organization that people who have not given before may want to use that first-time super credit for. They would get a little extra bang for their buck when they made that donation.

Another opportunity in Chilliwack is the Ruth and Naomi Foundation, which helps the homeless and the at-risk homeless in Chilliwack by providing them with a place to sleep and a warm meal. It is supported by local churches and organizations across the spectrum in Chilliwack. It is another great charity that would benefit from this super credit.

● (2050)

I wanted to talk about something else near and dear to the people of Chilliwack. A number of veterans have chosen to make their homes in my community, in large part because CFB Chilliwack was a place people used to come through for their basic training. Unfortunately, CFB Chilliwack was closed during the decade of darkness in the 90s under the Liberal government. However, a number of veterans have returned at the end of their military careers to make Chilliwack home. That is why I was pleased to see that Bill C-60 would include tax relief for Canadian Armed Forces members and police officers deployed on international missions. It would streamline the process for approving tax relief for those members who are deployed on international moderate-risk missions.

There are a number of veterans in my own family. Both my grandfathers served, one in the air force and one in the navy. I have a cousin who returned last year from a tour in Afghanistan, so this is an issue that hits close to home for me. That is why I was pleased that we would be improving veterans' benefits for low-income veterans of both the Second World War and the Korean War as well as their survivors.

We would provide assistance to additional veterans and their survivors. Under the current program, a veteran's total calculated income includes a disability pension provided by Veterans Affairs Canada. That pension is automatically deducted from the amount of benefits available to veterans and survivors under the war veterans allowance. Under the proposed amendments, to better assist those veterans who have served their country, the government would no longer take the disability pension into account when determining eligibility and calculating benefits under the war veterans allowance program.

Improving services for veterans is part of the pattern of our government. In the main budget, we doubled the amount available to the Last Post Fund. We have streamlined the veterans independence program to provide benefits directly to recipients of that program. Also, we have recently invested and promoted the helmets to hard hats program. That is just one more measure we have included in this recent budget.

I was at Hope Secondary School in Hope, B. C. this weekend and spoke to the graduating class there. It is a diverse community. There were a number of first nations graduates at Hope Secondary School. That is why I was pleased to see in the bill that we would provide \$5 million to Inspire for post-secondary scholarships and bursaries for first nations and Inuit students. That is something that would be welcome news to the over 30 first nations in my riding and the over 10,000 individuals in my riding who are first nations.

I was speaking with Chief Robert Hope of the Yale First Nation at that graduation. He had two members from his first nation graduating there. I could see the pride he had on seeing those folks walk across the stage to get their diplomas.

Our economic action plan is working. We have had record numbers of jobs since the depths of the recession. We have cut taxes over 150 times, resulting in savings of over \$3,000 for the average Canadian family of four. We continue to have the best banking sector in the world. We continue to lead the industrial world in economic growth.

Our economic action plan is working, and that is why I would ask all members of the House to support Bill C-60 so that we can continue to promote an economic plan that is working for Canadians.

• (2055)

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for his speech.

I am pleased to ask him a question today about an issue that I raised earlier in my speech, namely the tariffs on hundreds, if not thousands, of goods entering Canada. Tariffs are going up.

My question is simple: when a company increases its tariffs, whom does that affect? Who will absorb those costs, the consumers or the company? Does he think that consumers should pay the extra \$8 billion that these tariff increases will cost?

[English]

Mr. Mark Strahl: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is the youngest member in this House, and I am youngest member from British Columbia. This tariff regime we are talking about has not been changed since 1974, and that is four years before I was born and probably 14 years before the hon. member was born.

I think it is time we recognized that those economies the tariffs were designed to help, economies like China and India, have grown up a lot since 1974, as have we. For developing nations, this was a form of foreign aid.

We no longer need to provide those extra breaks to those countries. They are standing quite well on their own two feet. We should be looking to advantage Canadian manufacturers, Canadian businesses, and that is exactly what we would be doing with Bill C-60.

• (2100)

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was interested to hear the hon. member's comments with respect to how this budget would purportedly help veterans, and the measures that are in it with respect to the War Measures Act.

The member would undoubtedly know that those measures are a direct result of a five-year court battle that the government waged against disabled veterans. Those amendments should actually be called the "Manuge amendments", because they are in the budget only because of Dennis Manuge.

While these amendments would stop the clawbacks as the court ordered, they would continue to claw back welfare payments, other payments made by the Department of Veterans Affairs, old age security payments and CPP payments. That is how far this would go. It would go only as far as the court said it had to.

The member stood and said he is proud of what this budget would do with respect to veterans in the Last Post Fund; however two-

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thirds of all applications to the Last Post Fund were rejected before this budget and would continue to be.

He talked about the investment in the helmets to hardhats program; however the Government of Canada's investment into the helmets to hardhats program is \$100,000 to a website. That program is pretty much totally funded by private industry.

My question is for the member. Is he generally proud of what this budget would do for veterans, considering that all the changes in the budget with respect to veterans were forced on the government by the court in the Dennis Manuge case?

Mr. Mark Strahl: Mr. Speaker, indeed, I am proud of the steps we have taken for our veterans. It was the right decision to take, and we have committed the almost \$800 million that that court case will cost Canadian taxpayers. That is something that has been implemented, and we are proud to bring it forward in this budget.

The question I have for the hon. member is whether he is proud of his government that sent our troops to Afghanistan with green uniforms, into a desert theatre. Is he proud of sending them there with Iltis jeeps? Is he proud of sending them there without the equipment they needed to do the job?

We stand up for our men and women in uniform while they are serving and after they leave the forces, and members can bet I am proud of that.

[Translation]

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is always an honour to speak in the House to discuss and debate the issues of the day. I enjoying listening to the opinions of the members opposite, even though I do not always agree with them.

Every time I rise, I get a sense of déjà vu. Here we are, for the umpteenth time, debating an omnibus bill filled with measures that are in no way related to the government's fiscal policy. As with the other bills, our debate is subject to time allocation that was imposed by the government, of course.

[English]

The government likes to brag about its accomplishments and achievements, but it does not like to talk too much about its record-setting use of time allocation. Yes, these former Reformers who swept in from the west promising clean, open government and respect for the taxpayer have instead become what they professed to hate the most.

The scandals of the past month have proved this, complete with senators entitled to their entitlements, \$90,000 worth of hush money and the Prime Minister doing his best to avoid answering the real questions.

Limiting debate and trying to run away from transparency is disturbing enough when it is done by trustworthy, competent managers, but it is much worse when it is done by a government that has proved itself to be as ethically lacking as this government has.

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Once we wade through this massive document, we can see why the Conservatives would try to keep people from knowing what is in the budget. The bill contains many measures that concern many Canadians and have no place in a budget bill. A government that was confident in its ideas would simply introduce these measures as its own stand-alone pieces of legislation, instead of hiding them away in an omnibus bill.

Given that they have a majority in both chambers, we would think the Conservatives would have the confidence already, but a bill like the budget puts even that into question.

• (2105)

[*Translation*]

What are the Conservatives hiding in these bills?

Let us start with taxes. This budget contains hundreds of tax hikes on everything and anything, including hospital parking, bicycles, baby strollers, credit unions, safety deposit boxes and labour-sponsored investment funds. These increases will cost Canadians almost \$8 billion over the next five years. That is a lot of money for Canadians who are having trouble making ends meet. What is even worse is that the Conservatives are trying to hide these tax hikes in a huge bill.

Like many Quebeckers, I am a member of my local credit union. Credit unions provide important services and are active in our communities. Thus, I am personally affected by the changes that the Conservatives are proposing in this budget, which will increase taxes on these organizations and hinder their ability to compete with major banks.

The Conservatives and the Liberals have done enough to help major banks over the years. Every day in the business section of the newspapers, we read that banks are doing well and do not need the Conservatives to prevent credit unions from competing with them.

[*English*]

What else would Bill C-60 do? The bill would introduce changes that would allow the government to require a crown corporation to have its negotiating mandate approved by Treasury Board when entering a collective agreement with a union.

The Treasury Board could impose any requirement on a crown corporation respecting the terms and conditions of employment on its employees. No crown corporation that is subject to such a government order would be allowed to enter into a collective agreement without Treasury Board's approval, and the bill would also give power to the Treasury Board, on orders from the government, to fix the terms and conditions of employment for non-unionized employees.

The bill is a direct attack on the right to free collective bargaining, while also infringing on the independent arm's-length operation of these crown corporations.

Crown corporations have this independence for good reason, and the Conservatives know this, but in this case they have decided to simply ignore those reasons. This is a dangerous precedent that should concern Canadians of all walks of life.

[*Translation*]

In this bill, we also see that the government is continuing to take steps to create a securities commission without the consent of the provinces. Although the provinces of Quebec, Alberta, Manitoba and New Brunswick have all said that they do not want the commission, the government plans to continue to fund an office whose sole objective is to try to make this happen.

NDP members urged the government to co-operate and to work more closely with the provinces on all types of issues. However, the Conservatives have systematically ignored their suggestion. Instead, they continue to use the "take it or leave it" approach, which has only led to failure in the past. The government must work with the provinces instead of burying such measures in an omnibus budget bill.

[*English*]

Speaking of lack of consultations, let us talk about how the bill would affect aboriginal peoples. We in the NDP have been calling on the Conservatives to make aboriginal issues a priority in this budget. Unfortunately, the budget fails to address the major challenges facing aboriginal peoples in Canada or help move Canadians toward a new relationship with aboriginal peoples.

We have a couple of stark examples of how the budget fails. The budget would provide, for instance, Indspire with \$5 million in funding post-secondary scholarships and bursaries. On the surface, that sounds nice, but when we read the fine print of this initiative we see where the other shoe drops. In the budget it states that this money would be for students who are registered as Indians under the Indian Act and for Inuit students.

Indspire offers all aboriginal students funding, yet the government has deliberately left Metis and non-status students out in the cold. This was one of the few places where Metis and non-status students could get some federal government support for their post-secondary education, but the government would take that away.

To its credit, Indspire has stated that it will continue to offer funding to Metis and non-status students out of the money it raises itself, but the fact remains that the Conservative government would put Metis and non-status students at a further disadvantage than they already face.

• (2110)

[*Translation*]

In this budget, the Conservatives have also allocated funds to build 250 housing units in Nunavut over the next two years. That is a good thing for the people of Nunavut, and I have nothing against that, but there is a problem with this part of the budget.

According to Statistics Canada, overpopulation plagues my Nunavik constituents more than any other group of Canadians. Right now, they need 1,000 housing units. In 2012, over 90 cases of tuberculosis were reported in the region, and the epidemic has not let up. We know that tuberculosis develops in overcrowded dwellings.

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Unfortunately, this budget does nothing to help the people of Nunavik. Worse still, when the president of the Makivik Corporation asked for a meeting with the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development to discuss the situation, his request was denied. The minister's chief of staff sent him a two-line note saying that the minister was very busy and would not be able to meet with him, as though the problem could wait.

Although the people of Nunavut are getting a little of the help they need, I want to emphasize that the people of Nunavik cannot even get a meeting with the minister, let alone any money to address this very serious crisis. This is unacceptable, and it is yet another example of how the government is shying away from the need to create a new relationship with Canada's aboriginals.

I could go on at length about this budget's shortcomings, but I know that my time is almost up. I will therefore conclude by saying that Canadians need to hear that their government is practising good governance. We are part of the G8, and we are a strong democracy that expects a lot from its elected representatives. When the Conservative government passes bad bills, like this omnibus bill, by using time allocation, it insults this country's democratic principles.

It is clear from the people's reactions to scandals associated with this government that these expectations have not gone away. People will not let their government try to hide all of this. These insults to democracy have prompted my colleagues and me to reject this bill because of its contents and the process used to pass it.

[English]

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is quite an interesting speech in the sense that the member talked about the 100 or so pages of the budget being too long but then started listing a number of items that we want to see in the budget. So what has become clear is that it is only too long because he does not actually approve of some of the items that are in there, but if we did have the things he approves of, then maybe it would not be too long.

Opposition members talk a lot about the process of the bill and I have been waiting all night and have asked constantly this same question. Can the NDP members point out what they would do? They keep talking about the fiscal responsibility, but what would they specifically do to bring the budget into balance, especially in light of the fact that they have said they would not cut spending? This leads me to believe the only way they could balance the budget would be through increasing taxes. However, they have the opportunity. They talk about limiting debate, yet not one speech tonight has given one concrete example of what they would do to cut and to balance the budget—

Mr. Peter Julian: The F-35, the Senate; a hundred million bucks a year is wasted on your cronies.

Mr. Paul Calandra: I'll accept the member from British Columbia screaming that they would eliminate the Senate. Okay, I will take their \$90 million, but they still have a long way to go. So where are they going to do this and what piece of legislation have they brought forward with respect to the Senate, because I have not seen any of it?

[Translation]

Mr. Romeo Saganash: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member opposite for his important question.

We could list a host of things that could be cut. I could spend all evening doing that, but that is not the purpose of our debate right now. We are debating the bill before us.

My colleague from Burnaby said that we would abolish the Senate. We might also mention that we would stop fighting against the fundamental rights of aboriginal peoples, a fight that costs us roughly \$300 million a year. That is another example. There are many similar things that we could point to. However, that is not the purpose of this debate, which is on the budget before us and the changes that this omnibus bill makes to many laws.

• (2115)

[English]

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to switch gears for a second and ask the member a question about something that is very foundational for our future, which is science and technology, but particularly science.

I just want to remind viewers and Canadians who are watching what has gone on in past budgets and what is going on in this budget. Here is what has been eliminated by the Conservative government in the last several years.

The National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy is gone. Sustainable Development Technology Canada, which funds research, is barely surviving. The Canadian Foundation for Climate and Atmospheric Sciences has been eliminated. It has cut 700 positions at Environment Canada. The partnership with the United Nations Global Environment Monitoring System has been eliminated. The desertification convention research, which we are facing here in Canada and for which we need research, has been eliminated. The office of the science advisor has been eliminated. The Polar Environment Atmospheric Research Laboratory has been eliminated. The Experimental Lakes Area was eliminated until it was saved by the Ontario government.

Now we learn this week that between 500 and 600 jobs in our agricultural research stations across the country are being phased out. This is at a time when the government says that it is going to reorient 30% of our international aid to focus on agricultural opportunities in developing countries. It just does not square.

Can the member help us try to understand why a government would compromise a nation-state's future by undermining all of its foundational science?

Mr. Romeo Saganash: Mr. Speaker, what we have been witnessing over the past couple of years is the dismantling of the very foundations of our country, whether it is from an economic perspective, environmental perspective, human rights perspective or so on and so forth.

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Yes, we are dismantling the Canada that I used to know. It is rapidly disappearing. I come from a riding that has all of these challenges before me, whether they are environmental challenges, climate change, the future of aboriginal peoples, resource development or water rights and so on. These are all challenges in my riding and I do care about them.

We need to do things right this time. That is not happening right now.

Mr. David Wilks (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is great to be here tonight to speak on Bill C-60.

Throughout the past several weeks I have been able to travel throughout my riding of Kootenay—Columbia and discuss economic action plan 2013. Municipal and regional governments have endorsed this budget because it identifies their needs, which are to ensure that ongoing funding is provided for infrastructure that is very important to every community from coast to coast to coast.

The community improvement fund would provide funding in the amount of \$32.2 billion over the next 10 years through the new building Canada plan and, most importantly, it would give greater flexibility to a broad range of infrastructure priorities, which would include highways, local and regional airports, short line rail, short sea shipping, disaster mitigation, broadband and connectivity, brownfield redevelopment, culture, tourism, sport and recreation. Coupled with the new building Canada fund and P3 Canada, this funding would represent the largest and longest federal investment in job creation infrastructure in Canadian history.

Having been the mayor of Sparwood, British Columbia, for six years, I appreciate the input that the federal government can provide, but I also understand that the municipalities must do their part to ensure their communities remain vibrant.

I listened with interest this weekend to some of the comments from FCM, where some mayors said that money was not enough. Some called for national strategies. Politicians from all levels of government are great at studying things, but it is at the municipal level where the rubber hits the road. Therefore, I would suggest that communities across Canada have shovel-ready projects in which they will have full participation and quit speculating on what we can do for them.

Kootenay—Columbia is a rural riding that has some of the highest tourism visits in all of Canada due to the splendour of the Rocky Mountains, national parks, skiing and golf opportunities. I am proud of all the amenities that provide for a great visitor experience, but with that there is a great strain on affordable housing. With \$1.9 billion over five years to create affordable housing, this is great news for towns like Fernie, Kimberley, Golden, Invermere and Revelstoke. Those who work in the service industry have historically been at the lower end of the pay scale and depend on housing that is reasonably priced. Through this funding, our government will assist the communities that need to sustain housing that is affordable.

The Canada job grant would provide \$15,000 or more per person in combined federal, provincial and employer funding. It is something that would benefit any person who is considering a career in the trades. This must be a combined effort by everyone affected by this shortage. A number of companies in the riding of

Kootenay—Columbia, including Teck Resources, Canfor and Louisiana-Pacific, welcome this news. Companies from across Canada are in dire need of skilled workers due to an aging workforce and an increased natural resource extraction sector. Our government is doing our part to help in this regard. The provinces recognize their role and, most importantly, industry members know that they must come to the table. Otherwise, it will deter their ability to grow.

One of the biggest challenges that companies have is the shortage in tradespeople. A significant number of people are pulled away from one company to another via signing bonuses and other financial incentives. The only way for this to stop is by training as many people as we can to ensure companies can keep up with the demand.

In budget 2013, our Conservative government said that we would fix the temporary foreign worker program. Just over one month after release of that budget, our government introduced legislative, regulatory and administrative changes that would, effective immediately, require employers to pay temporary foreign workers at the prevailing wage by removing the existing wage flexibility, temporarily suspend the accelerated labour market opinion process, and increase the government's authority to suspend and revoke work permits and labour market opinions if the program were being misused.

● (2120)

It would add questions to employer LMO applications to ensure that the temporary foreign worker program is not used to facilitate the outsourcing of Canadian jobs. It would ensure employers who rely upon temporary foreign workers have a firm plan in place to transition to a Canadian worker. It would introduce fees from employers for the processing of labour market opinions and increase the fees for work permits so that taxpayers are no longer subsidizing the costs. It would restrict English and French as the only languages that could be identified as a job requirement.

The results of these changes would strengthen and improve the foreign worker program, support our economic recovery and growth, and ensure that employers make greater efforts to hire Canadians before hiring temporary foreign workers. These reforms would ensure that the temporary foreign worker program, which is an important program to deal with acute skills shortages on a temporary basis, is used only as a last resort.

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I am very pleased to see that \$9 million is proposed for the first nations land management regime to provide additional first nations with the opportunity to enact their own laws for development, conservation, use and possession of reserve lands. This would add 33 first nations to the regime, including the 8 announced earlier this year. Two of those first nations are in my riding of Kootenay—Columbia. The St. Mary's Band and the Akisqnuq Band were recent uptakes to FNLM. Both of these bands are very progressive and are moving forward with great initiatives.

Further, enhanced health services within first nations are also a top priority.

Just this past weekend, I attended the grand opening of the Three Voices of Healing treatment centre at the Shuswap First Nation. This centre offers 12 beds for 41-day alcohol and drug addiction adult residential treatment programs and 30 beds for 91-day aftercare treatment programs. This aftercare program is the first of its kind in the country and is funded from grants received from various organizations and foundations.

Three Voices of Healing Society has been in operation since 1997. In September 2012, it was able to purchase this new facility in order to offer the new aftercare program. The need for aftercare has been identified through regional and national needs assessments and research in alignment with the objectives of the program renewal initiative of the national native alcohol and drug abuse program.

The aftercare program would address a critical gap in service within the B.C. first nations' continuum of care for addictions. It must be noted that within minutes, and I literally mean minutes, of mass emailing and faxing of the announcement of this new programming to all the bands and the front-line workers in British Columbia and Alberta, the phones lit up continuously and have not slowed down. I have seen first-hand the importance of these facilities. What is so impressive with this aftercare program is the ability for clients to find a skill that they can take with them after treatment.

Our government provides \$100 million annually for aboriginal mental health programs and services.

I am honoured to work with the Ktunaxa and Shuswap First Nations in the Kootenay—Columbia, which are both progressive and visionary for their future.

I have given a few examples of how economic action plan 2013 would benefit, not only my riding of Kootenay—Columbia, but all Canadians from coast to coast to coast. I look forward to working with my constituents to ensure that we continue to live in the greatest place on Earth.

● (2125)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Raynault (Joliette, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are proposing to correct major flaws in the temporary foreign worker program by giving the minister the last word when the work permits or opinions concerning an application for permits become a source of political embarrassment.

Could he elaborate on that?

[*English*]

Mr. David Wilks: Mr. Speaker, all parties recognized that the temporary foreign workers program needed to be fixed because it was being abused. We are moving forward with the appropriate measures to fix it. We look forward to businesses and companies utilizing it the way it was supposed to be utilized, and that is in the correct manner.

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to turn the issue to the question of costs and budgeting in this budget. The member is a former RCMP officer and I commend him for his 20 years of service in a difficult profession.

I want to talk to him about crime bills, and I am sure he has some good insight in this regard. For the first time in commonwealth history, a government has been found in contempt for not providing costs with respect to crime bills.

The government is very fond of mandatory minimums. We heard another private member's bill today on mandatory minimums. I think the member knows the connection between mental health, substance abuse, poverty and crime. California, Texas and other states that have been driving the mandatory minimum agenda are now backing away rapidly from it. In the case of California, mandatory minimums have often been described as one of the most expensive costs that the state has to bear and they are really pulling the state down. Mandatory minimums do not work.

With this explosion of mandatory minimum offences now being brought to bear in the Criminal Code, could he help Canadians understand how much money in this budget has been earmarked for transfer to the provinces to assist them with what will likely and inevitably be a very large increase in the number of incarcerated Canadians?

● (2130)

Mr. David Wilks: Mr. Speaker, there is no relevance to what occurs in states like California because the fact is that it has a “three strikes and you're out” rule. The third strike means an individual stays in jail forever no matter the crime. Therefore, its increase in the prison population ballooned because of that.

Mandatory minimums have been around for a long time, not only in Canada, but across the United States, and have been proven to be an effective means of deterring those who commit those crimes either at a provincial or federal level.

We need to focus on the victim of the crime. The victim is most important. Those who go to jail have to understand that they have not only hurt the victim, but they must also pay the penalty for the crime they have committed.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I was surprised to hear my hon. friend from Kootenay—Columbia claim that there was evidence that mandatory minimum sentences worked.

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When we went over Bill C-10, the omnibus crime bill, I searched in vain for any empirical study by any criminologist anywhere in the world that suggested these were anything but a massive failure, particularly now with the evidence coming from Texas. That state has been unsuccessful and has found that mandatory minimums do not reduce the crime rate but do cause increased problems within prisons and increased costs on the taxpayer.

Could my hon. colleague point me in the direction of any study that supports the idea that mandatory minimums are anything but a colossal failure?

Mr. David Wilks: Mr. Speaker, the study I could point my colleague to is my 20 years of experience. The revolving door of people going in and out of the system does not work. Serving time in jail actually does some people good.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jonathan Genest-Jourdain (Manicouagan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when I last spoke in the House I made some observations about a recurring theme in the government's initiatives and announcements, and that is that the government is distancing itself from social intervention, more specifically from providing services in the country.

My last intervention focused on charities. I tried to substantiate my comments by introducing our audience to the notion of distancing, the government's desire to withdraw, a desire that has been obvious every day since it came to power. I could see that there were some controversial topics that Canadians viewed somewhat unfavourably. This government is often an easy target, both within Canada and internationally. That is the case when it comes to human rights—which I will come back to later—and access to clean drinking water. Recently in committee, we were examining Bill S-8, an initiative that once again transfers the burden of sanitation and access to clean drinking water onto first nation band councils. As everyone knows, this a fundamental right that is enshrined in the Constitution and one that is internationally recognized. Access to clean drinking water is crucial; it is a basic human right. The government is trying to step back from its obligations, to distance itself, and is transferring this burden to other bodies such as band councils, which do not necessarily have sufficient financial resources to deal with these issues.

Bill C-60 contains the same kind of blind transfer of responsibility. Some subjects are rather contentious, rather controversial. That is why the government is trying to get out of its obligations, or at least distance itself from the negative spotlight associated with certain subjects.

I will now substantiate my remarks by giving some concrete examples.

Throughout this mandate, many members in this House have joined with the auditor in exposing the obvious, chronic underfunding of education in first nation communities. The public's interest in the debate and the media coverage of the shortcomings affecting academic opportunities for a growing segment of the population helped fuel the Idle No More movement.

With respect to education, I read earlier on the CBC website that people are beginning to ask some questions about education for first

nations and the general population. They are examining their own situation and their reality, a reality that is reflected in the debates in the House and in the implementation of the measures introduced in the House and sometimes in the Senate. Personally, I think too many measures are coming from the Senate.

That education works to free the people. That is why, in 2013, government agencies are instead focusing on training that meets the needs of companies involved in extracting natural resources. I am seeing that in my own riding. Those of us on the front lines can see that training programs, especially in remote areas, are designed to meet the needs expressed by a significant segment of industry. There is an attempt to push students towards programs that meet the needs of extractive companies, to the detriment of general education that encourages analytical and critical thinking regarding many of our country's contentious issues. That is basically what I wanted to say.

Now I would like to take a look at some of Canada's social statistics. It seems there is a 30% gap between the funding provided to students attending schools on reserve and other Canadians who attend provincial schools. That reflects the fact that natural resources are mainly, but not exclusively, being extracted in remote areas. My riding, where natural resources of all kinds are being extracted, is a clear example of that.

• (2135)

That is why this government does not necessarily have any interest in giving Indians access to post-secondary education. They will find themselves in situations that are similar to the ones they are facing now.

I am calling all of that into question and exposing it. The public has taken up this cause, and because of the advent and the growth of social media as we know them today, it does not take long for the information to get to remote communities. The Internet has become more widely available in recent years, and people have access to that information, even in remote communities. That is why the government tries so hard to restrict first nations' access to education.

Access was facilitated when I began studying law. There were programs that made it possible for aboriginal students to be admitted to law programs. There were pre-law programs, which were eliminated over time. Barring any proof to the contrary, those programs are no longer available today. Of course, it all depended on what government was in place at the time. There was a clear desire to include and extend that freedom to a segment of the population.

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I was from a remote community, and that was a life-saver, if I may say so. I managed to get away from my community and its deleterious elements. Leaving did me a world of good. Now the government is trying to keep people in their communities. That explains the 30% disparity. It is the government's way of keeping Indians on reserve. There are times when the circumstances make life on reserve destructive, poisonous even. That seems to be their plan. That is my own perspective for your consideration, Mr. Speaker.

Considering the vast gulf dividing Canada's aboriginal and non-aboriginal groups in terms of academic opportunity, it is conceivable that the government is trying to delegate the implementation and funding of education programs for aboriginal clients across the country. That is why I have my doubts about the measure in Bill C-60 to transfer \$5 million to a charitable organization responsible for distributing post-secondary education scholarships to students registered under the Indian Act and to Inuit students.

I am not the only one who is skeptical about this type of announcement. Some observers, both here in Canada and abroad, have their doubts. In fact, in this case, the Conservatives are blindly delegating the implementation of public policy. Instead of focusing on the real disparity in funding for the training and education of first nations youth—young people who are disadvantaged and who must face adversity on a daily basis—the Conservatives are delegating everything to an organization. The organization may be well run, but it is a non-profit organization, a para-public or charitable organization, that is not necessarily accountable. The Canadian government must set the parameters for implementing measures that foster access to higher education for first nations because, in the end, it is bound by its fiduciary obligation to them.

The delegation of this task leaves me perplexed and skeptical to say the least. In fact, we know that \$5 million is not a huge amount in any event, especially when we consider the number of young people who will have access to or who are old enough to have access to quality education, higher education. This leaves me perplexed.

I submit this respectfully.

• (2140)

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have been waiting all night for some indication from the New Democrats with respect to their fiscal responsibility. In the last speech we finally heard—

Mr. Peter Julian: The Senate, F-35s, advertising for natural resources, they've been giving you these answers.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if you might bring the member opposite under control for me. That would be very helpful.

We finally in the last speech heard that the one policy the New Democrats did have with respect to fiscal responsibility, bringing back the budget into balance, was the elimination of the Senate, which, according to them, would save \$90 million, and I think they are right. I know we have heard all night how difficult it is when we put too much before the New Democrats. They cannot quite analyze it. Therefore, I want to drill down specifically then on the Senate because they have said that it is very important.

I wonder if the member could share with me what policies, bills and amendments the New Democrats have brought forward to the finance committee with respect to the elimination of the Senate and how they intend to deal with the objections of many of the provinces to the elimination of the Senate. If he could just follow up also with how they intend to deal with the NDP leader's current bill, which would give more powers to the Senate. If he could just zone in specifically on those items with respect to the Senate because that is their only fiscal plank with respect to reducing spending.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jonathan Genest-Jourdain: Mr. Speaker, is the hon. member sure he wants to talk about the Senate this evening? We could talk about despots, small private clubs, partisan appointments and nepotism. I think those are some terms that will keep coming up.

The news speaks for itself. This issue is rather controversial. If I were in the hon. member's place, I would distance myself from the Senate as much as possible, especially when such a negative spotlight is shining on it. The situation is not in their best interest.

According to the news, we are right. The NDP's desire to abolish the Senate seems to be taking shape and Canadians seem to be on board.

[*English*]

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, budget 2013 would offer mere scraps for the environment and in no way make up for the war on the environment and science that the government has been waging and would continue to wage.

There would be \$4 million for marine-based ecosystem conservation, when the government has promised to protect 10% of marine areas and yet has protected only 1%.

There would be \$10 million for the conservation of fisheries and a salmon conservation stamp, after eviscerating the Fisheries Act.

There would be a new tax credit for clean energy worth a tiny \$1 million for a global \$1 trillion industry.

Perhaps most concerning of all is the lack of action on climate change, when the government is under increased scrutiny by our largest trading partner, the United States, and we have record low Great Lake levels, which are mentioned but not acted upon.

The environment is merely an afterthought for the government.

• (2145)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jonathan Genest-Jourdain: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her question.

I agree with her. Contrary to all the hype surrounding the television ads broadcast during prime time, the environment is not a major concern for the government. The government sees the environment as something that gets in the way of economic expansion.

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In 2013, environmental and social considerations are seen as obstacles to economic expansion. This is highly reprehensible on the part of this government, because these are things people identify with. They are essential for human survival. I think we can draw our own conclusions about this.

The meagre allocations mentioned by my hon. colleague truly reflect this lack of willingness, or at least, the real importance the government places on these issues, which are in fact critically important.

This government's "extractivist" measures and its legislative initiatives and initiatives on the ground will meet the needs expressed by industry above all. They will be brought forward in order to please lobbies and special interest groups. Again, it is a question of nepotism, investment and favouritism.

[*English*]

Mrs. Kelly Block (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to be able to speak today on Bill C-60, economic action plan 2013 act.

I would like to begin by thanking the Minister of Finance and the Minister of State for Finance for their hard work on behalf of all Canadians.

I have been engaging my constituents in Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar on what course of action our government needs to take to promote long-term prosperity for all Canadians. Their message is consistent and clear. Canadians are reasonable people; they expect a pragmatic government that is a cautious steward of our economy, a careful caretaker of our natural resources and one that focuses on job creation to ensure that every Canadian can have a job and succeed. They want low taxes and quality services.

As a parent and a grandparent, I want Canada to be the best place to live, work, raise a family and retire. I want every Canadian to be able to take advantage of all our great country has to offer.

Budget 2013 is good news for Saskatchewan and for Canada. The budget would invest in the success of Canadians. It would invest in our infrastructure and it would invest in our strong and resilient communities. It is a plan for a successful and prosperous future. The budget focuses on the priorities of Canadian families, Canada's young people, Canadian students, Canada's job creators and Canada's job seekers.

I would like to highlight how the budget would help Saskatchewan's families, our businesses and our communities. Allow me to state the obvious. Our most valuable asset as a country is our people. As a government, we have a responsibility to make sure every person has the opportunity to reach his or her full potential. Right now in Canada, there is a clear mismatch between the jobs available and the skills held by job seekers in Canada.

The Canadian Chamber of Commerce has identified the current skills shortage as the number one obstacle to success for its members. There are too many jobs that go unfilled in Canada because employers cannot find workers with the right skills. If unaddressed, this labour mismatch has the potential to disrupt our economy and our prosperity. In fact, Saskatchewan's economy has

been on such a positive expansionary phase that we are now facing labour shortages in many sectors.

I would like to talk about four areas of focus in the budget that would help Saskatchewan get the skilled workers it needs and allow us to fulfill the very potential that our first settlers saw when they came to the Prairies.

The centrepiece of economic action plan 2013 is the Canada job grant. The job grant would transform the way Canadians receive training by providing up to \$15,000 per person to help ensure Canadians are able to access the training they need to get jobs in high-demand fields. The Canada job grant would take skills training choices out of the hands of government and put them where they belong, in the hands of employers with unfilled jobs and Canadians who want to work.

Second, economic action plan 2013 would follow through on budget 2012's commitment to increase women's participation in non-traditional occupations. Women now represent close to half of Canada's workforce, yet as a group they continue to be under-represented in areas of science, mathematics, engineering and technology, the very same fields in which we are experiencing labour shortages.

Our government, and especially my colleague, the Minister for the Status of Women, has taken a keen interest in this matter as it makes strong economic and business sense to have both men and women equally active in the workforce. It goes without saying that countries with strong labour force participation from both men and women typically have stronger and more durable economies. I am pleased that our government is delivering on our commitment to increase opportunities for women's participation in non-traditional occupations and keep our economy strong.

Third, Canada's young aboriginal population has tremendous potential for long-term success and prosperity, but remains under-represented in both the labour market and in post-secondary institutions. Since 2006, our government has made innovative investments to address these challenges, including efforts to strengthen on-reserve elementary and secondary education and skills training programming for aboriginal people.

● (2150)

Building on these actions, economic action plan 2013 would introduce a number of practical steps. The skills and partnership fund would provide project-specific funding to aboriginal organizations in an effort to improve labour market outcomes for aboriginal people.

The first nations job fund, totalling \$109 million over five years, would fund the provision of personalized job training on reserves. Budget 2013 would also invest \$10 million over two years for post-secondary scholarships and bursaries for more than 2,000 first nations and Inuit students annually. This would be delivered by Inspire, Canada's largest indigenous-led charity, which has a stellar track record of success.

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Fourth, this government, under the tireless leadership of the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, has made significant progress implementing long-overdue reforms to Canada's immigration system, with the focus on attracting talented newcomers with the skills and experience our economy requires. Earlier this year, our government opened up a new skilled trades immigration stream that will facilitate the entry of immigrants who have the skills needed to immediately find a job and begin contributing to our economy.

What I have outlined are just some of the many new steps our government is taking to address the labour mismatch that exists in Canada.

Our government knows that low taxes and a skilled workforce keep our economy growing, but as an exporter nation, we need to continue to work to open up new markets for Canadian companies to sell their goods. For the first time in our history, we are aggressively diversifying our markets and making it easier for business to trade with emerging markets.

Since coming into office, we have signed nine free trade agreements with countries like Colombia, Panama, Korea and Jordan, and we are currently working on free trade agreements with the European Union, Japan and China, just to name a few.

This pro-trade agenda is working for Saskatchewan. Earlier this year Statistics Canada announced that Saskatchewan had become Canada's fourth largest exporter of goods. Saskatchewan exports grew by over 10% last year, to reach \$32.6 billion, and have more than tripled over the past decade. My home province's exports were also quite diversified. One-third of exports were agricultural products, one-third were energy products and the remaining were manufacturing and services.

This government is also putting in place the infrastructure Canada needs. For years, provincial and municipal governments, who are responsible for the majority of infrastructure in Canada, have been asking the federal government for a long-term plan to address these needs. This budget would invest over \$70 billion in new infrastructure funding over 10 years in support of local and economic infrastructure projects.

This is the longest and largest federal infrastructure plan in Canadian history and is something I know every municipality in my riding, from Saskatoon to Sunningdale, would benefit from.

However, this budget is not just about the present. It is also about the future. Budget 2013 would keep Canada on track to return to balanced budgets in 2015. In fact, the deficit has been cut in half over the past two years, and Canada has the lowest debt to GDP ratio in the G7.

We have done so well maintaining and building on critical services. We are also keeping taxes low for Canadians and for Canadian businesses. Canada's federal corporate tax right now sits at 15%, down from 21%, and the federal sales tax now sits at 5%, down from 7% when our government took office.

An average family now pays \$3,100 less in taxes than when we took office in 2006, and Canadians now have the lowest tax burden

in more than 50 years. That is something that everyone in the riding of Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar appreciates.

Our government's plan is working, not only for Saskatchewan but for all of Canada. Our government's goal is to make Canada the best place in the world to live, raise a family, work or start a business.

Bill C-60 would keep Canada on track for long-term prosperity, and I would encourage all members of this House to support it.

• (2155)

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleague's speech with interest. As this whole debate is about the economy, I just think about how lucky we are to live in a country like Canada where we have so many natural resources to take full advantage of, but then it starts to make me worried about what we are doing with our knowledge economy.

Frankly, the government is failing to look forward to when our resources begin to dwindle. How do we start to compete with other countries that have fully invested in their knowledge economy? Our GDP investment in research and development is declining. Our productivity rates are declining.

I am just wondering if my colleague could really reflect upon what the government is doing to stimulate the knowledge economy. What is some good news, because we cannot find any in the reports coming out internationally?

Mrs. Kelly Block: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned in my remarks, I believe that Bill C-60 manages to hit all the high points when it comes to growing Canada's economy and creating jobs and long-term prosperity. In looking at some of the measures included in this implementation bill and in budget 2013, I will highlight two or three about investing in world-class research and innovation.

We would support the commercialization of research by small and medium-sized enterprises by investing \$20 million to help small and medium-sized enterprises in Saskatchewan and across Canada access research and business development services at local universities and colleges. We would also strengthen research partnerships in the marketplace by investing \$37 million in Saskatchewan and across Canada to support collaboration between post-secondary institutions and industry to bring new technologies, products and services to the marketplace to help spur job creation. Finally, we would promote clean energy projects, providing \$325 million to support the development and demonstration of new clean technologies across Canada that create savings for Canadian businesses and support job creation for Canadians.

Government Orders

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the plan is going so well, if the plan is working to a T for the Conservatives, and the unemployment rate for youth has gone from 11% since the Conservatives took power to 14.5%, are we looking at maybe 17% youth unemployment by the time they finish their mandate? Is that going to be a real success?

Mrs. Kelly Block: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, this government is definitely concerned and has put measures in this budget that look at growing our economy and at creating jobs in all sectors for all ages. This budget also focuses on many things in terms of increasing skills and training support, including the proposed new \$15,000 Canada job grant to help more Canadians find high-quality, well-paying jobs.

We are providing a record \$70 billion in federal investment infrastructure across Canada over the next 10 years. That is going to be a job creator. That is going to provide future jobs for our youth.

• (2200)

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to start off by saying that I have only 10 minutes. Given the many criticisms we have levied at the Conservatives for their incompetence on fiscal and budgetary matters and their inability to run a modern economy, I do not think 10 minutes will be enough. However, I know that my colleagues in the NDP caucus will be speaking to this as well, and we will be speaking as long as we can, because there are a variety of issues that need to be raised.

I would like to start by putting on the floor a fact the Minister of Finance is well aware of. The fiscal period returns filed with the Department of Finance, which is surely not a hotbed of social democrats, have been saying for 20 years running that the best governments for balancing budgets and paying down debt are NDP governments. The Minister of Finance knows this. He would never stand up and praise the NDP. However, he knows full well that the NDP is best at balancing budgets.

NDP governments are simply better than Conservative governments. I will not even talk about Liberal governments, because they are in last place. The reality is that we run a better health care system, pay more attention to the environment, do more for working families, and most importantly, are actually better at balancing budgets than the Conservatives are. That is why I think in 2015 we will see the first federal NDP federal government in Canadian history.

Talking about balancing budgets is one thing, but let us talk about the economic record of the government. We have had some Conservatives today stand up. They love to say that they have created hundreds of thousands of low-cost jobs for temporary foreign workers. That is the only thing they can point to as far progress and any sort of success for the Conservative government.

We think that is wrong-headed. The economic direction of the country should actually be to look at building high-paying jobs for Canadians. It is a different approach. However, when we look at the Conservatives' record, they have lost half a million well-paying, family-sustaining jobs in the manufacturing sector. Then they deposit a budget, which we are discussing tonight, Bill C-60,

which, according to a legitimate, independent, impartial judge, the Parliamentary Budget Officer, would cost Canadians 67,000 jobs.

The Conservatives are laughing at that. They are saying, "So what?" Ordinary working families actually care that the Conservatives have been so inept as to lose 67,000 jobs through their budgetary incompetence.

When we talk about the loss of high-paying, family-sustaining jobs in the manufacturing sector, something the Conservatives do not seem to understand, they reply that they are creating well-paying jobs in the Canadian Senate.

I think it is fair to say that on this side of the House, we do not even think the Senate should continue to exist. Like most Canadians, we believe that the Senate should be abolished and that the \$100 million we put into it to bloat the expense claims of Conservative senators could better serve by providing support for working families in this country. That is what an NDP government would do, of course.

On other budgetary priorities of the Conservative government, we have had some very eloquent speeches tonight from the member for Manicouagan and the member for Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, who talked about the crisis we are seeing in northern housing, yet Conservatives want to put money into the F-35s, even though the initial budgetary proposal of \$9 billion bloated to \$20 billion then \$30 billion and now \$40 billion-plus. No one knows on this side of the House how much this will eventually cost Canadians. There is not a single Conservative who is able to give us a precise number.

However, it is not just that. It is the Conservatives' other record.

The Conservatives have inflated the advertising budget in just one ministry by 7,000%. There is a 7,000% increase in advertising for Natural Resources Canada. It is as if they are opening their wallets, which actually belong to the Canadian taxpayers, and throwing money on the floor. It does not seem to matter when they are running ads. As the member for Ottawa Centre said so eloquently, it is for programs that do not even exist. They are just running and throwing money left, right and centre.

• (2205)

The Prime Minister flew at a cost of over \$1 million to have his limousine over in India. We have seen Conservative cabinet ministers going from four-star hotels, because that was not good enough for them, into five-star hotels. It is simply unacceptable.

Conservative fiscal management is an oxymoron. What we have is Conservatives simply betraying their voters. This is what I hear most often. It is Conservative voters, people who voted Conservative in the last election, who tell me that they did not vote for this. They did not vote for the corruption, scandals and fiscal mismanagement. They did not vote to lose jobs. They did not vote for a threefold increase in temporary foreign workers when job training programs in Canada are going unfunded. They did not vote for all of that.

Government Orders

A time of reckoning is coming soon. Canadians are very upset at how the government has betrayed the commitments they ran on.

I want to say one more thing about the whole approach on the economy. We think it is just wrong-headed. We see what the Conservative government is doing putting all of its emphasis on exporting raw resources—raw bitumen, raw minerals and raw logs. When the Conservatives send raw materials out of the country, they are actually exporting Canadian jobs. They should not be proud of that. They should be ashamed of exporting Canadian jobs.

What we say is that we need the value-added here. In my riding of Burnaby—New Westminster, after the softwood sellout was signed by the Conservatives, 2,000 full-time family-sustaining jobs were lost. Three plants went down. Canfor, Interfor and Western Forest Products went within weeks of the signature on that softwood sellout. Those jobs can only be re-established if we have a government that is determined to bring value-added manufacturing back to Canada.

Look at the green energy sector. There is a revolution happening worldwide. We are talking about \$2 trillion in investments over the next decade and five million jobs worldwide in clean energy and renewable energy sources, but the Conservatives are saying, no. What they are going to do is continue to subsidize the very profitable oil and gas sectors by over \$1 billion a year.

On this side of the House, we think that is wrong. On this side of the House, we actually think that we are seeing these countries, as the member for Burnaby—Douglas mentioned, investing in innovation, research and development and green jobs, and that is the future path Canada should be taking.

More and more Canadians believe in that vision as well. We are seeing more and more Canadians looking forward to 2015 when they can get this wrong-headed approach out and actually look with hope and inspiration to future prosperity in this country.

There is one last thing I wanted to mention. I come from a riding where the vast majority of my constituents are new Canadians. They have seen how mean-spirited Conservatives are when it comes to gutting the family reunification program and increasing costs for visitor visas. The families I represent, who want to come for funerals, weddings or the birth of a new child in the family, are stopped by Conservative incompetence in the immigration file. In fact, we have never had a time when it was tougher for families to get together just to visit.

However, we see in Bill C-60 that the Conservatives actually want a blank cheque from new Canadians for visitor visas for their families in their countries of origin when they come from India, China or the Philippines. When they come to Canada, the Conservatives are slapping them in the face and saying that now they are going to pay more. Not only are the Conservatives going to reject their applications; they are going to pay more for visitor visas and for student visas. When their family members want to come and visit them in Canada, they are going to have to pay more. As we know, in most cases, they are rejected.

That shows the height of disrespect for new Canadians in this country. On this side of the House, in the NDP caucus, we believe that new Canadians are first-class Canadians too. They deserve to

have their family members come and visit them for these important family occasions and not be attacked by these mean-spirited Conservative taxes they impose for visitor visas, student visas and the like.

• (2210)

We believe that new Canadians should be treated with respect. What a concept.

For that and many other reasons, we are going to be voting against this mean-spirited budget, against the financial incompetence of the government and against the attacks that it is putting against Canadian families.

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member and I are both from British Columbia. He was lecturing the finance minister earlier about NDP governments. He will remember the nineties when Premier Mike Harcourt resigned in disgrace in British Columbia. Premier Glen Clark resigned in disgrace in British Columbia. In fact, in the election that just occurred in British Columbia, British Columbians were so alarmed at the prospect of another lost decade of another NDP government that Adrian Dix's 22-point lead in the polls evaporated because of the anti-development, anti-jobs, high tax rhetoric that we hear parroted by the member right now.

Why does he think that a message that was so soundly rejected by British Columbians will suddenly now be embraced by Canadians?

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Chilliwack knows, as all British Columbians do, that what we saw from the B.C. Liberals was the same type of game plan that we had seen from the U.S. Republicans, and I am sure we will see from the federal Conservatives, to try to consciously suppress the vote. They wanted to drive that voting down. They wanted to drive the percentage of British Columbians who voted down. They are very proud of this. One can see how proud they are.

There was a lower voting percentage than ever before. The Conservatives are very happy about that. However, we have certainly learned the lesson from the voter suppression techniques Conservatives have learned from Republicans. In the next federal election, we will have the highest voter turnout in recent times in a federal election. That is going to make the difference between the government getting re-elected or the government being shown the door.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-François Larose (Repentigny, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the former parliamentary budget officer repeatedly said that this budget lacked transparency and clarity. The documentation is not available. We often find that we cannot get information from committees. The reports are incomplete and subsequently kept secret. Everything is done in camera. This was understood in Quebec, and the Charbonneau commission was created.

Government Orders

Have we come to this? Honestly, this still feels like an empty shell and an omnibus bill. We want to have more and we can never get more.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Repentigny for his question. He is a new member and does a remarkable job in the House of Commons in terms of speaking about this transparency and clarity. I thank him for doing such a good job in the House.

Canadians are calling for transparency. When we talk about financial issues, we are not talking about money that belongs to the Conservatives. It is not money they earned. This is money earned by the taxpayers of Canada, who then gave it to the federal government.

The former Liberal government was not transparent. The Conservatives have proven to be even worse. That is why we want to have a parliamentary budget officer who can bring some transparency to the overall financial management of this country. It is a matter of respect for Canadians.

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): We have time for a short question and response.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

• (2215)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I wish it did not have to be a short question because it is a big topic. Does the hon. member for Burnaby—New Westminster have any idea why a government that claims to be interested in doing a national security review of foreign investments coming into Canada has refused, first in 2009 with the amendments to the Investment Canada Act and now with Bill C-60, to reject a clear definition of national security such as one would find when dealing with national security issues under CSIS?

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, the member's question is critical. We had just a few months ago over 70% of Canadians saying that they did not believe the government should rubber-stamp the takeover of Nexen, a company in Calgary, by CNOOC. I went to Calgary many times and Albertans were the strongest opposed to this. The Conservative government rubber-stamped it. It said that it would sell Nexen to CNOOC and would sell out any other company.

Then to compound the government's error, in this budget document it is actually trying to have fewer of these takeovers even looked at by the federal government. Conservatives rubber-stamped it. They are irresponsible and now they are trying to hide their crime by changing the whole fashion in which we look at these Investment Canada issues. It is a lack of respect for Canadians to say that Canadians should not have some way of looking at whether the takeover is in Canada's interest.

Ms. Michelle Rempel (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if I could give this speech a title, it would be called, "And Now For Something A Little Different".

What I would like to look at tonight is found under division 4, clause 127, of the bill which is, "Payments to Certain Entities or for Certain Purposes", specifically Genome Canada. Many of my

colleagues in the House know that I spent part of my career prior to politics in the world of academic research administration and I had the opportunity to work with some projects that were funded by Genome Canada.

I was really encouraged to see in the budget bill and, subsequently, the bill we are discussing tonight, an additional \$165 million in multi-year support for genomic research through Genome Canada. This funding would enable Genome Canada to launch new large-scale research competitions over the next three years, support continued participation by Canadian genomics researchers in national and international partnership initiatives and maintain Genome Canada's operations and the operations of regional Genome centres and science and technology innovative centres until the end of 2016-17.

I do not think a lot of people are aware of the mandate of Genome Canada, as well as the field of genomics research itself. I certainly cannot profess to be an expert in the content of the research, but the impact of the research is so far reaching and affects so many different sectors of industry, such as environmental health and the health of our populations, that it is worth taking notice of during this debate. It is a substantive sum of money for this organization.

I apologize to my colleagues for borrowing heavily from Wikipedia and the Genome Canada website tonight in my speech, but, as a bit of background, the field of genomics is one that applies recombinant DNA, DNA sequencing methods and bioinformatics to sequence, assemble and analyze the function and structure of genomes. The field includes efforts to determine the entire DNA sequence of organisms and fine-scale genetic mapping.

Again, as I have seen the work that Genome Canada has done, even on the periphery as a research administrator, the impact that the projects it has funded have already had on different sectors of the economy has amazed me. It is also working with some of the key questions that some of our industries wrestle with, such as how we can increase productivity using this technology, how we can produce products in a more environmentally-sustainable way, how we can clean up the environment and how we can make our populations more healthy. All these questions are being addressed in the Genome Canada centres located across the country, which I will speak to in a little more detail. This is an amount of funding that impacts everyone in this place because every region of Canada I believe has a Genome Canada centre that is doing work within the regions.

Genome Canada is a not-for-profit corporation established to accelerate Canadian research capacity in genomics. Genome Canada is a catalyst for developing and applying genomic sciences that create economic wealth and social benefit for Canadians. It works in partnership to invest in and manage large-scale research and translate discoveries into commercial opportunities, new technologies, applications and solutions. It builds bridges between government, academia and industry to forge a genomics-based public-private innovation focused on key life science sectors.

Together with its six Genome Centres and other partners, Genome Canada invests in and manages large-scale research projects in key selected areas. Genome Canada also supports research programs aimed at studying and analyzing the ethical, environmental, economic, legal and social issues related to genomics research. In addition, as I mentioned earlier, five science and technology innovation centres with cutting-edge technical capabilities have been put in place across Canada to support large-scale projects.

What is really neat about the funding model for Genome Canada is that while our funding agreement states that the Government of Canada provide 50% of the funding, Genome Canada actually leverages this funding on a 1:1 basis. Therefore, it has to find 50% of matching funds to push its programs forward. We have seen a leverage fund take the research forward even further.

The partnerships that Genome Canada has built, not just with the academic community but with industry, is a model that we should be looking at in how to bridge the technology gap, taking research from the bench and translating it out to the public, but also ensuring that, where possible, we are addressing the concerns of industry, communities, et cetera, in research and acknowledging the need for basic research. There is a lot of basic research funded through Genome Canada's applications as well.

● (2220)

I mentioned earlier that there were Genome Canada centres across the country. There is one in British Columbia, Alberta and the Prairies. There is an Ontario Genomics Institute. There is one in Quebec, as well as one in Atlantic Canada. This is a centre that has impacts across the country and funds projects in many of my colleagues' ridings, if they have a university in their riding. Many of their industrial partners in their high-tech sectors or life sciences sectors may have projects with this organization as well.

Given that I am the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, I have been keenly interested in some of the projects they have been working on with regard to environmental technologies. I would like to read some of this for my colleagues, so they can have an understanding of some of the environmental background work that Genome Canada is doing in this area. Here is a quick excerpt:

Micro organisms such as cyanobacteria, which have minimal nutrient requirements, use electrons from water and the energy of sunlight when they convert atmospheric CO₂ into organic compounds. What's more, they do so without producing greenhouse gases. Genomics can tap the accumulated wisdom of hundred of millions of years of evolution. The opportunities for developing biotechnology solutions to the challenge of climate change will be greatly enhanced when we will understand the molecular biology of plants and micro organisms such as bacteria and algae.

Government Orders

There is a really neat piece on the Genome Canada website about some of the work that it does with regard to environmental technology. I invite my colleagues to take a look at this, because some really fascinating projects are going on across the country in this area.

I would like to mention a few tonight, just so my colleagues have an understanding of the impact this funding is going to have on research in this area. It is going take place across the country.

I would remiss if I did not mention Dr. Gerrit Voordouw at the University of Calgary, who has a phenomenal project that deals with hydrocarbon metagenomics. Basically this research is developing biotechnology that will reduce the environmental impact of oil sands operations and make hydrocarbon energy extraction more efficient.

The technology that is coming out of this lab is incredible. It is cutting edge, and to be honest, the field of genomics is a field in which Canadian researchers punch above their weight internationally. We have such a wealth of research capacity in this field and this funding will help continue that excellence into the future.

Also, because it is a leverage funding program, it is encouraging industry partnerships to take place so we grow the receptor capacity for these technologies as we go into the future.

I have a couple of other examples from across the country. Dr. Adrian Tsang at Concordia University in Montreal and his group of researchers are working a really neat technology, isolating enzymes that could replace the harsh chemicals currently used in pulping and bleaching. He is working with fungal enzymes, which digest the brown lignin in wood, leaving the white cellulose behind for use in making paper.

Going back again to the petroleum sector, we have the president of the Petroleum Technology Alliance Canada just recently said in a news article that genomics was one of the areas in which his industry was looking to develop breakthrough technologies. These are the game changers that help make industry both more productive and more environmentally sound. Some of the technologies that it is looking to develop might include engineering microbes to remove hydrogen sulphide from sour natural gas or to facilitate environmental cleanup.

Also in a couple of different areas, Genome Canada has funded the British Columbia Cancer Centre, which sequenced the SARS virus genome in 2003. It has also funded the Centre for Applied Genomics at the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto, which in 2010 published genetic variants associated with autism.

To the point I made earlier about how Canada punches above its weight, Dr. Steven Scherer, director of the Toronto centre, talks about how Canada has leapfrogged ahead in its international standing since the field of genomics science has been developed.

What I want to leave my colleagues tonight is there are very good pieces of funding within the budget bill. We also have over \$300 million dedicated to Sustainable Development Technology Canada, which its president was very supportive of after the budget bill was tabled.

Government Orders

It is these sorts of innovative technologies, including increased funding for our tri-council Agencies, as well as the Canada Foundation for Innovation, which will ensure we continue to have excellence in Canada's research fields. I certainly hope people will look at the field of genomics research and vote in support of the budget, specifically because of this clause.

• (2225)

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is some excellent research being done in Canada that we should all support, but the government has a little trick. It pulls out anecdotal information about particular projects that are being funded, but it fails to account for the overall picture of science and technology in Canada.

I asked the Library of Parliament to do a bit of work. It is not Wikipedia, but it might be a bit better than that. It shows that overall S and T funding by the government has dropped by 8.6% since last year and 14.5% over the last two years, so while we hear members on that side bragging all the time about science and technology investment, they are actually cutting hard and deep.

I am wondering if my colleague on the other side could somehow justify these cuts to scientists in Canada.

Ms. Michelle Rempel: Mr. Speaker, the numbers that my colleague is referring to also include the funding related to the knowledge infrastructure program, which was part of the economic stimulus program that was related to the economic downturn in 2008. This was a one-time program to build out research infrastructure while promoting job growth during a time of downturn in the country. Programs such as this that are infrastructure-based do have a sunset clause. They are put out and they are spent out in a period of time, so it is going to affect the overall funding picture.

What is interesting to note is that if the member looks at any of our granting councils, be it SSHRC, CIHR, NSERC or the Canada Foundation for Innovation, he will see that we have increased the funding amount significantly since we came into office.

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to follow up on that comment from the parliamentary secretary, because my understanding is that the granting councils have been cut by \$148 million.

I would like to come back to some of the remarks she made about Genome Canada, a creation of a previous Liberal government. I think she was referring to the notion of some kind of approach to innovation in Canada, but it is important for her and for Canadians watching tonight to understand that there really is no innovation strategy left in Canada. There is no innovation strategy whatsoever.

Let me highlight what is going on in this region right here. In 2000, Ottawa-Gatineau, as a cluster area, was receiving 61% of the venture capital in Canada. It had just under 5,000 high-tech companies. We are now down below 2,000 high-tech companies. Venture capital is fleeing not only this region but all of Canada because the government is not investing in general science or in general research.

Recently I met with the head of a stem cell research institute in my riding that is affiliated with the Ottawa Hospital. The individual told me that not only is the funding being cut, but now the folks who are

doing the advanced research are saying that the system of peer review that must be in place in order to have a fair and transparent bidding process for granting has been dismantled and that it is now based on political factors, on held ridings—

• (2230)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but we need to keep some time for the hon. parliamentary secretary to respond.

Ms. Michelle Rempel: Mr. Speaker, to address part of my colleague's questions about the actual year-over-year funding amounts, especially for the tri-council agencies, I was able to find NSERC's budget right off the bat. The 2005-06 budget level was \$859 million. In fiscal year 2011-12 it was \$1.08 billion. That is the sort of trend that our government has shown in spite of the global economic downturn. Why? It is because we understand that investment in research and technology translates into a more diverse and successful economy.

With regard to some of my colleague's other questions, he also has to understand that in order to develop opportunities for commercializing our research, we have to develop receptor capacity within our country. How do we do this? We attract the best and brightest minds, we fund them through programs such as the Canada excellence research chair programs and we look at additional markets for our products through trade deals. There are a wide variety of programs that we have focused on, not just through funding but in addition to funding, in order to increase that receptor capacity, bring the researchers into this country and keep them here.

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am really pleased this evening to be here to be debate Bill C-60, the government's omnibus budget bill. It is another omnibus bill, unfortunately, and it is too bad we do not have the committee time allocated to deal with so many hundreds of different measures that I think are deserving of greater scrutiny, but that is just the way it has been for the last several years with this particular regime.

Budgets are about making choices. They are about collecting hard-earned tax dollars, and they are about spending those tax dollars by informing that spending with the priorities of a particular government.

It is unfair for any party to say that it does not support at least some measures in a particular budget. Let me say from the beginning that there are measures in Bill C-60 that we do support, measures such as improving the war veterans allowance; expanding the adoption expense tax credit; combatting tax evasion; extending the accelerated CCA, the capital cost allowance, on manufacturing equipment; and many others. It is not a question of indicting the entire budget. However, taking the budget as a whole, this party, the Liberal Party of Canada, cannot possibly support this budget.

I want to take this narrative, if I could, to a little higher level so that Canadians can understand some of the basic principles behind what the government is doing.

The bottom line in this budget, and I will come back to it in a second, is that taxes on the middle class are going up, and they are going up quite dramatically. It is a bit of a sleight of hand, but I hope to illustrate in a few moments how this is being done and why it is being done.

Government Orders

Let us step back. This is the biggest-borrowing, biggest-spending government in Canadian history. No government has borrowed more money and no government has spent more money, ever, in Canadian history.

It has gone from a \$13 billion surplus to massive deficits. There has been an increase of \$156 billion in the national debt, which as of today stands at \$610,583,990,221.28. That is our national debt as of today. It is up by over \$156 billion.

That is surprising, one would say, because it comes from a Conservative right-wing government, one would say, but let us hold on for a second, because this is actually quite a familiar pattern.

It started with Mr. Reagan in the United States. It continued through Mr. Bush. It continued through Premier Mike Harris and a small number of other right-wing Conservative governments in Canadian history, and it is now here.

Here is how it goes. First, the Conservatives get elected. They inherit a very healthy surplus.

That is number one.

The second thing they do, in order to curry favour and buy votes, is compromise their revenue-raising capabilities.

Then they go to the market and borrow heavily.

When they borrow heavily, they drive up their national debt quite significantly and then, of course, they create massive deficits.

Then, what do they do when they are faced with massive deficits and a very arbitrary timeline called the 2015 general election?

What they do is they begin to weaken our cherished Canadian public services. That is what they do, and they do it with a new twist. The new twist with the current government is that in order to pay for it, they stick it to the middle class. People in the middle class have to pay more taxes. Small and medium-sized businesses are paying more taxes, and they are also paying for it in cuts in services.

Let me illustrate what I mean when it comes to raising taxes.

Bill C-60 would raise taxes on Canadians this way. Small business owners, the backbone of the Canadian economy, would receive a \$2.3 billion tax increase over the next five years. Who would that hurt? It would hurt 750,000 Canadians and it would risk Canadian jobs.

As well, the bill would raise taxes on credit unions by \$75 million a year, which is an attack on rural Canadians and our rural economy.

• (2235)

It would also nickel-and-dime Canadians. It would add HST or GST to certain health care services, such as medical work that victims of crime need in order to establish their case in court. It would even raise taxes on safety deposit boxes. It would increase far more taxes than it would decrease. That is an objective fact.

Why is the government doing this? It is because the federal Minister of Finance learned at the feet of one of the masters. That master was a man named Mike Harris, in Ontario, whose principal adviser was Mike "Mud" Murphy from the state of New Jersey. That

state went through the same kind of reckless experimentation that Ontario went through, and the minister has brought those lessons to bear here, except that it is more surreptitious, more underhanded, more stealth-like.

Here are examples of how the government is weakening our cherished Canadian public services.

We live in a federation of 10 provinces and three territories, and in the last six years there has not been a single meeting of first ministers on Canada's cherished national public health care system. That is unconscionable and indefensible.

What the government does is go into a back room and take a number. It might as well throw a dart at the wall. It takes a number to say it will increase health care funding by this much. That is it. There is no dialogue, no discussion, no priorities. Whatever happened to the government's wait time promises? We are still waiting. That has all evaporated.

There is no plan post-2014 for health care and no interest in a national approach to health. As a result, our cherished public health care system is weakening.

With respect to immigration, planned cuts would create longer waiting times. Family reunification would now be massively delayed. It is often characterized by members of the government as wasteful and expensive for the Canadian people when there is not a shred of evidence to suggest that is the case.

With respect to public safety, the Auditor General told the government that the cuts to front-line border offices would seriously compromise Canadian security at the border when it comes to inspections, drug enforcement, weapons caches and beyond. Less enforcement means more problems.

With respect to crime, there would be mandatory minimum sentences. We have been told that this would solve our victim problem. Really? Every single study ever conducted on crime tells us that a dollar spent up front saves us a \$40 fee at the back end and minimizes the risk to potential victims in Canada.

It goes on. With respect to the environment and science, which we spoke about earlier, the budget would cut 700 positions at Environment Canada and 600 positions in agricultural research stations this week alone.

Search and rescue centres have closed in St. John's and Kitsilano, compromising public safety.

Let us take Canada's role in the world for one minute. After 60 years of Canada's brand being so strong at helping Africa, we are abandoning Africa. No matter what the government says, we are abandoning Africa at a time when all the economists are telling us that Africa is growing at 6% to 10% a year. Just when the economic opportunities have arrived, Canada is pulling out.

Government Orders

We are abandoning multilateral traditions such as the UN Security Council. The Minister of Foreign Affairs has said he wants to compel the Russians to do something about Syria, but then announced a week later that we would not even try to get a UN Security Council seat. That makes no sense. Multilateralism is in our DNA, and we have pulled out of it. Mulroney understood it with anti-apartheid. Chrétien understood it with anti-land mines. Martin understood it with the G20. Multilateralism has helped Canada punch above its weight.

The Prime Minister will not even speak to the UN General Assembly, while President Obama does it every year.

● (2240)

I will close with this: perhaps the most disturbing aspect for Canadians is a new propaganda campaign. Maybe it is because the Prime Minister did not win his personal lawsuit against Canada when he wanted the National Citizens Coalition to force all restrictions on advertising during political campaigns to be removed. Maybe that is why he is spending \$600 million on government advertising, something that no member of that caucus can possibly defend.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Ottawa South for his speech.

I get the impression that the Liberals will vote against Bill C-60. Although we are talking about the Liberals here, it can sometimes be surprising to see a change in direction.

My question is very simple. The Liberals have been strongly opposing Bill C-60 all evening, so I would like to know how many amendments they presented at report stage.

If my calculations are correct, I think you could count them on the fingers of an armless man. I do not understand how they can be so staunchly against Bill C-60, when they did not try to improve it.

Mr. David McGuinty: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

We did present amendments.

We must be honest with the Canadians who are watching this evening. Here is the truth about amendments.

The majority Conservative government does not approve of amendments being proposed and also categorically refuses to adopt them.

We must be honest with Canadians. We work very hard to present another approach to Canada's future. I do not think it is constructive to bicker over technicalities about the rules of the House of Commons.

[*English*]

Hon. Lynne Yelich (Minister of State (Western Economic Diversification), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member said that he cannot support our budget and I would like to know why, especially in Ontario, he cannot support a budget that supports Canada's manufacturers. The tax relief for new manufacturing machinery and equipment, by extending the accelerated capital cost allowance for

two years, increases support for manufacturers by almost \$1.4 billion. I do not understand why the member cannot support that.

I cannot understand why he would not support large-scale technology projects exhibiting strong commercial potential and promote cross-industry collaboration.

I cannot understand how he cannot support encouraging firms to invest in biogas production, or how he cannot support lowering business tax, or making Canada the first major economy tariff-free zone, or launching the venture capital action plan. I cannot understand why the member from Ontario cannot invest in what I am sure most people in Ontario would like to see the member invest in.

Mr. David McGuinty: Mr. Speaker, this is a familiar and, frankly, ruseful tactic by the government on a regular basis. I explained earlier in my remarks that there are measures in the budget we actually do support. The problem is that the overall direction that the government is taking us in is exactly the direction that previous republican, right-wing governments took us in and it led to massive failure.

Therefore, until we see a proper innovation strategy for the country, until we see diversification, until we see a real venture capital plan for the country, until we see the freeing up of good science in the country that is not linked to the government's five priorities for commercialization and all kinds of other measures, it makes it very difficult and very unpalatable for Ontarians, by the way, of all stripes to support the government on this budget.

● (2245)

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, because I know there are a lot of new Canadians living in his riding, I want to ask the member for Ottawa South what he thinks of the Conservative attacks around visitors visas, making it much more difficult for new Canadian families to have loved ones from abroad come and visit them here in Canada. I am talking about funerals, weddings and the birth of children. It is already increasingly difficult for those families to get approval, now we see in this budget document the Conservatives attacking new Canadians by forcing their loved ones to pay more, and repeatedly more, to have access to Canada.

Mr. David McGuinty: Mr. Speaker, one of the most foolish things a government can do in the 21st century is compromise the transition with which new Canadians can come into Canada. We see their family as visitors who participate fully in Canadian society. Immigration is the lifeblood of our future.

I used to live in Italy and I lived in Britain. I worked in the Soviet Union after the wall fell. In so many countries where I have worked, I have seen governments struggling to attract immigrants, struggling to bring in the lifeblood to keep their economies going. We should be looking to facilitate, not make it more difficult, for new Canadians to join us.

Government Orders

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak tonight on behalf of my constituents as we wrap up debate on Bill C-60, our government's legislative implementation of Canada's economic action plan.

I would like to thank the Minister of Finance for his great work managing Canada's economy. Canada has held the strongest record of growth and job creation among the G7 countries during the recovery from the global economic recession. As I have done before, I would like to thank the Minister of Finance for consulting with Canadians and giving us the opportunity to submit our constituents' recommendations directly to his office. This budget is for Canadians by Canadians. The Minister of Finance has built an extraordinary foundation for economic growth. He has done this by focusing on the needs and priorities of Canadians, including keeping taxes low, and by identifying and eliminating government waste.

Our economic action plan is focused on five pillars: The first is connecting Canadians with available jobs, the second is helping manufacturers and businesses succeed in the global economy, the third is creating a new public infrastructure plan, the fourth is investing in world-class research and innovation, and the fifth is supporting families and communities.

In my previous remarks on Canada's economic action plan, I talked about the issues that matter to the people I represent: job creation, business taxes, infrastructure, and how the federal government is assisting families and communities. It is the remaining pillar of our economic action plan that I would like to touch on today: our government's commitment to invest in world-class research and innovation.

The global economy is changing. In order for Canadian businesses to remain competitive and create jobs, we believe the government has an important role to play when it comes to research and innovation to ensure that Canada is on the leading edge of science and technology. Since 2006, we have provided more than \$9 billion in new resources to support science, technology and the growth of innovative firms. Beginning this fiscal year, we will build on this foundation with new investments to support advanced research and pursue a new approach to supporting business innovation and enhancing Canada's venture capital system. In supporting advanced research, the Government of Canada partners with industry and academia to fund research projects that are critical to maintaining our competitive edge in a global economy.

Let us take a look at what is on the line. According to the OECD science and technology indicators, Canada ranks first among the G7 countries in higher education and development spending as a percentage of GDP. We are world leaders in this area. In its September 2012 report, "The State of Science and Technology in Canada", the Council of Canadian Academies noted that Canada is internationally renowned for excellence in a wide range of disciplines including clinical medicine, information and communication technologies, physics and astronomy, and psychology and cognitive sciences. We owe it to Canadian researchers to continue to invest in their work and institutions.

I will talk specifically about our post-secondary institutions and how we are looking to assist them in their research goals. I am a member of the Conservative post-secondary education caucus,

which is shared by the member for Winnipeg South. Our focus is on consulting with Canadian colleges and universities to ensure they have a line of communication with their government and to ensure that our young generation of post-secondary students are able to thrive in academic environments and become Canada's leaders of tomorrow. We are very pleased with this budget's commitments to post-secondary research, which would strengthen research partnerships between post-secondary institutions and industry, reinforce Canadian research capacity in genomics and support leading-edge research infrastructure.

In terms of strengthening research partnerships between post-secondary institutions and industry, our economic action plan has budgeted \$37 million annually to support research partnerships with industry through the granting councils. To break this down, \$15 million would fund the Canadian Institutes of Health Research strategy for patient-oriented research, which would not only contribute to Canadian innovation, but would ultimately benefit health care delivery and, most importantly, patients.

● (2250)

Seven million dollars per year would be allocated to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. This funding would, in part, support research related to the labour market participation of persons with disabilities.

The remaining \$15 million per year is budgeted for the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council, including \$12 million to enhance the college and community innovation program. This program helps firms to become more innovative and productive by supporting collaboration between colleges and industry. It has been an incredibly successful program, and has resulted in cutting-edge products that overcome barriers and solve everyday problems.

In my riding, Red Deer College continue to produce world-class graduates in a variety of disciplines and contributes applied research in our community. The office of applied research and innovation links the expertise of Red Deer College with partners in central Alberta from both the public and private sectors. Red Deer College operates the centre for innovation and manufacturing and facilitates the execution of a number of research and demonstration projects. The college is active in several areas of research, including several projects in community health innovation in collaboration with the local health authority and health care providers.

It is no coincidence that the government's plans line up with what is really happening in academia. We are committed to helping Canadian post-secondary institutions with their priorities. They are the experts and the researchers who see the light and know what research is needed, and which projects are cutting edge. We have consulted with them and we are committed to investing in their work.

When I see the research and innovation areas that our economic action plan will contribute to, I am confident the Red Deer College will benefit from our investments.

Government Orders

Our government also recognizes that federally sponsored research undertaken at post-secondary institutions entails indirect costs, and so we provide support for these through the indirect cost program. In the coming year, the government will examine the indirect cost program, in consultation with the post-secondary sector, including the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, to ensure that the program is meeting its objectives of reinforcing excellence in post-secondary research. We are looking forward to these discussions with the post-secondary sector.

We recognize that in order to yield the world's best research, Canadian researchers need leading-edge infrastructure. They need a place to carry out their research, experiments and inventions. To assist post-secondary institutions with their infrastructure needs, economic action plan 2013 prioritizes funding for the Canadian Foundation for Innovation. The CFI is a not-for-profit corporation that supports modernization of research infrastructure at Canadian universities, colleges, research hospitals and other not-for-profit research institutions.

It plays a vital role in attracting and retaining the world's top researchers and training the next generation of researchers and highly skilled workers. To date, the government has provided close to \$5.5 billion to the Canadian Foundation for Innovation to sustain its core investment activities. Building on this commitment, economic action plan 2013 is announcing that a further \$225 million would be allocated to enrich the leading-edge new innovations fund competition, sustain the CFI's operations, support cyberinfrastructure and respond to evolving priorities approved by the Minister of Industry. It is important to note that this funding will be sourced from accrued interest income from funding that CFI had previously received from the government. This is further proof of our commitment to efficient use of taxpayers dollars. It is a win-win for Canadian taxpayers and researchers.

As a former teacher, I have been involved in academia as a student as well as a mentor for ambitious young Canadians who have gone into research fields in a variety of disciplines. I am very aware of the importance of public investment in our colleges and universities. To maintain a successful economy, one that creates jobs and opportunities for all Canadians, a focus on post-secondary education and its infrastructure is vital. This is where our leaders of tomorrow are learning today.

The investments that this budget makes in post-secondary research and innovation will benefit our economy for generations to come. The spinoff effects of research and innovation on our economy are incalculable.

● (2255)

I make a last-minute plea to the opposition to appreciate the benefits that these investments will result in, and support this budget. Whether encouraging job creation, promoting economic growth or ensuring Canada's long-term prosperity, our focus is on what matters to Canadians. My constituents have told me that the priorities of this budget are the priorities that matter to them as taxpayers: creating jobs, keeping taxes low, investing in public infrastructure and world-class research and innovation, and supporting Canadian families. That is what this budget would do and I am proud to stand in support of it on behalf of the hard-working taxpayers of Red Deer.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

I would like to talk about a topic that he did not address himself. Perhaps he had a good reason, since this was not good news for Canadians, and more particularly for Quebecers.

I am talking about the elimination of the tax credit for labour-sponsored funds, including the FTQ and CSN funds in Quebec. Eliminating this tax credit will save the government \$350 million, including \$312 million in Quebec.

Clearly this is a direct attack on the Quebec economy. These labour funds enabled people to get an additional tax credit while investing in local businesses that sustained the economy of most regions in Quebec.

Could he talk about the government's decision to eliminate this tax credit and explain why he has attacked the economy of Quebec's regions?

[*English*]

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Mr. Speaker, I am not familiar with the specifics of the question the member asked, so I am certainly not the person to be able to answer his specific question.

The types of investments this government has been making in communities and in business opportunities, for those who are willing to get involved and to put all of their efforts into it, have really been phenomenal. I know that the people in my part of the country in Alberta, when we are talking about the opportunities of the Canada job grant, say these are the types of things they want to get at to try to find ways of getting our young people working and helping the disabled. These are the types of things that are happening in our communities, done by people within the community who are trying extremely hard to make sure the best things are happening for individuals.

● (2300)

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, thanks to my colleague for his work as a teacher and for his speech. Being at the forefront of knowledge and technology innovation is crucial for economic growth. Countries that aspire to stay at the forefront must ensure knowledge expands steadily.

According to the Conference Board of Canada, our country ranks 13th out of 16 on innovation among its peers, under the current government, and performs poorly on most of 21 indicators, scoring 13 Ds. In 2012, Canada slipped by two to 14th place on the World Economic Forum's ranking of global economic competitiveness, a drop of five places since 2009.

Should the government develop a national innovation strategy, increase spending on science and technology and help emerging sectors achieve their potential?

Government Orders

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what we have done. I believe we were all in the House when British Prime Minister David Cameron said if one looked at the best English speaking education system in the world, that would be in Alberta. As a teacher from Alberta, I thought that was certainly something to be proud of. However, the same type of thing is happening in our universities and our colleges. We are finding we have some fantastic people coming in to the different chairs that have been developed, and we can be extremely proud of those individuals. Giving them this opportunity to take the knowledge and drive they have and to put it with innovation and the help of the research dollars we are presenting is a critical part that we should all be proud of.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I admit there is money going to science. However, the fundamental problem is that ever since the budget in 2012, in which federal contributions to science were described as having to be "business-led" and "industry-relevant", we are hobbling the best brains.

We are going to have nothing but better studies of widgets. We do not get good science by insisting that something be commercially directed. Alexander Graham Bell was not trying to invent the telephone; he was trying to figure out how the human ear works so that he could help the deaf.

We will never be a leader in science in Canada if we are only focused on immediate commercial benefit.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Mr. Speaker, when I take a look at the types of intellect we have here in this country, I know that if we simply talk about the dollars being invested into industry-led initiatives, we would be frustrated. However, that is not what is happening. To make the suggestion that it is the only channel that is being followed is inaccurate. Certainly I put my faith and trust in the researchers we have in this country.

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity to speak for a few moments on Bill C-60.

I want to focus on how I think Bill C-60 is another piece of legislation, another action, on behalf of a government that has forgotten its commitment to equal citizenship.

I am sure all members are aware that section 36(1) of our Constitution commits Parliament and provincial legislatures to promote equal opportunities and further economic development to reduce disparities in opportunities. Section 36(2) goes on to commit to the principle of making equalization payments to ensure that provincial governments have sufficient revenues to provide reasonably comparable levels of public service at reasonably comparable levels of taxation.

All governments of the day supported those guarantees of equal citizenship when they were adopted back in 1982. There was even agreement on strengthening the language as part of the Charlotte-town accord. Unfortunately, during the mid-1990s, the government of the day put debt and deficit ahead of commitment to sufficient revenues for the provinces, but at least it spread the pain more or less equally.

The current government, and Bill C-60 is a reflection of this, was elected back in 2007 on a commitment to fix the fiscal imbalance

between the federal government and the provinces. However, since then, it has backed away from this commitment, and in a way that inflicts greater pain on the less wealthy provinces.

The first step came in 2008 when, without any warning, the Minister of Finance imposed a ceiling on equalization, essentially scrapping a formula that was the product of several years of consultation. Frankly, it was a betrayal of the equalization-receiving provinces, which had agreed to a new per capita funding formula for health and social transfers. They believed that the new enriched equalization program of 2007 would help them deal with their differing needs and fiscal capacities and enable them to meet their commitments to providing "reasonably comparable levels of public services at reasonably comparable levels of taxation".

The next attack on equal citizenship took place three years later, when the Minister of Finance, again without consultation, as we have seen with Bill C-60, delivered a take-it-or-leave-it health deal. This move snuffed out any hope the provinces had for negotiating a new health accord, one that would better address the challenges of providing comparable services across the country. Instead of the open-ended 6% annual increases promised during the 2011 election campaign, the deal imposed by the Conservative government provides that some provinces will be getting less than a 1% increase in the next fiscal year, 2014-15, and in 2017, if the Conservative government is still around, the 6%, which is not actually 6%, will drop to 3%. This will be further devastating for citizens of less wealthy provinces, especially those provinces with older populations.

When we throw into that the decision on the retirement age and the plan to dismantle the Health Council of Canada and its mandate for national health standards, it is clear where the Conservative government is going.

The Conservatives not only ignore section 36 of the Constitution; they will undo the 30 years of social progress that has preceded it. It is progress that was the legacy of leaders like Tommy Douglas, John Diefenbaker and Lester Pearson.

Having promised to fix the fiscal imbalance, the government has instead made it considerably worse. Since 2007, transfers to the wealthier provinces have gone up at a faster rate than to the less wealthy. This is despite the fact that commitments made under section 36 of reasonably comparable services at reasonably comparable rates of taxation have clearly not been met.

On the services side, one only needs to look at the shocking disparity in prescription drug coverage in this country. It was described not long ago by *Global and Mail* columnist André Picard, who wrote that, when it comes to prescription drug coverage, "there is a basic unfairness that exists in the wide provincial variations... [that] offends the principles of medicare and Canadian values".

That wide variation he writes about can include an individual who is receiving treatment, paying up to \$20,000 a year for a certain drug in some provinces while the drug is free in others.

Government Orders

• (2305)

On the taxation side, there is also a wide variation in provincial taxation that defies the definition of “reasonably comparable”. At the two extremes are Alberta and Quebec. In one province, provincial taxes claim about 9% of personal income. In Quebec, it is over 22%. Some of that wide variation, of course, is the result of policy choices, but much of it has to do with the wide disparities in fiscal capacity.

The Constitution identifies, as I said earlier, two complementary approaches to dealing with such fiscal disparities. One is economic development. The government's approach to economic development is to say that if you have oil or gas, stand aside and let the private sector develop it. In the Atlantic provinces, for example, \$30 million would be cut from the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency in this budget. Otherwise, they are out of luck. The second approach is equalization. The government put a ceiling on equalization. Together with the new health deal, this has left many provinces in a bind. They are looking at no-growth federal transfers and rising costs in meeting their commitments, especially in health care.

Equalization has been described as the glue that holds the Canadian federation together. The Minister of Finance decreed back in 2008 that the Canadian government could no longer afford to apply as much of this required glue. His claim was that the cost was unsustainable. However, in the fiscal year just passed, equalization was less than 1% of the country's GDP, about .86%, which is well below the historical average and lower even than in the mid-1990s, when the books were in much worse shape than they are today. Back then, when our debt-to-GDP ratio was twice what it is now, the national government was investing nearly 1.1% of GDP in equalization.

Therefore, I would argue that we can afford to increase equalization, and we must increase it if Parliament is to meet its constitutional commitments. In saying that, I am aware that equalization clearly benefits citizens in receiving provinces like mine by providing a better quality of service at lower rates of taxation than would otherwise be the case. However, equalization also benefits citizens in non-receiving provinces, not just those citizens who are altruistically inclined but those who hew to the bottom line.

Let me cite a couple of examples from Alberta economists. My first authority is Melville McMillan, professor emeritus of economics at the University of Alberta. In a recent report for Ontario's Mowat Centre, he argued that equalization enhances economic efficiency by discouraging interprovincial migration undertaken to access better services or to face lower taxes. I have seen in my own province that parents of children with autism have joined parents from other less wealthy provinces in moving to Alberta to take advantage of a wider range of services there for their children.

This, along with the disparity in drug coverage already mentioned, is an example of how we have failed to achieve the comparable level of services mandated by the Constitution.

As McMillan pointed out, differences and financial capacity can distort labour in capital markets and reduce national output, but well-

designed equalization programs offer a means to correct or offset that.

For a more down to earth assessment, this is what Calgary economist and author Todd Hirsch had to say in *The Globe and Mail*:

Albertans...need to recognize the tremendous benefits we enjoy from Canada's open labour market. If someone summed up every year of education that every interprovincial migrant ever brought with them to Alberta, and estimated a dollar value of those years of education, it would amount to tens of billions of dollars.... Alberta's gain in educated workers has been other provinces' loss, and a lot of that education was paid for with equalization transfers.

My point is pretty simple. The government fails to recognize the fact that we are a federation, that we are a country where provinces are developing at different levels.

• (2310)

Every Canadian, according to the constitution, deserves to receive a similar level of services at a similar level of taxation. Bill C-60 does not achieve that. It is going in the wrong direction. The sooner the government wakes up, the better this country will be.

Hon. Lynne Yelich (Minister of State (Western Economic Diversification), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member was talking about disabled persons and those we want to give opportunities to. Last year, we maintained the program, and we would maintain \$40 million per year starting in 2015-16. That is an opportunity fund for persons with disabilities. The program would be reformed to meet more demand-driven training solutions. There is additional funding of \$7 million per year proposed for social services and the humanities. It proposes to provide a time-limited investment to support the creation of a Canadian employers disability forum.

I would like to know if the member realizes that although the area of autism has disparities across the country, it is under the purview of the provincial governments. It is their responsibility to decide what their priorities are. Alberta decided that autism was a higher priority.

As a federal government, we are targeting an overall national program, and that is to give opportunities to the disabled community. I would like to hear the member dispute that we are helping the disabled.

• (2315)

Mr. Robert Chisholm: Mr. Speaker, the way the government is distributing funds across the country is affecting the capacity of provinces that do not have access to natural resources at this particular time. It is affecting the provinces' capacity to adequately deliver those resources. That is the point I was making. That is the point I continue to make.

Second, the question on Bill C-60 is whether that particular program the member mentioned is the same as the youth jobs program or the training programs the government has failed to begin negotiating with the provinces or the private sector, even to this day, to make them a reality rather than simply an advertisement or a talking point.

Government Orders

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to pick up on the member's insightful remarks about the government's unwillingness to actually speak with the provinces.

It appears to be an us-and-them game or approach. The hon. member is an experienced parliamentarian. He served in the Nova Scotia legislature as a former leader of his party. Has the member ever seen the kind of thing we are seeing today, with the government now running television advertisements telling Canadians about a training program in the country that actually does not even exist? There are small words at the bottom of the caption saying "subject to parliamentary approval".

We just came out of another hockey game tonight, an NHL playoff game. The ads are costing \$100,000 every time a 30-second ad is run. Has the member ever seen this kind of approach to spending Canadian taxpayers' dollars in his political life?

Mr. Robert Chisholm: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question, although I do not know that I have ever been called insightful before. I do not know what I said to deserve that.

The ads the member referred to are a bit much, especially when they are advertising programs that simply exist on paper and that involve negotiations with the provinces and the private sector that have not even commenced. This is the kind of consultation the government has been doing all too often.

Let me say that I have been around a long time. I was sitting in the provincial legislature in the mid-1990s under the then-Liberal government, which was doing some awful things to provinces like ours as a result of decisions that had been made that the provinces were not particularly aware of.

This kind of autocratic behaviour by a federal government is being brought to a finer point, perhaps, under this government, but it has been around for a while.

* * *

FIGHTING FOREIGN CORRUPTION ACT

BILL S-14—NOTICE OF TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to advise that an agreement could not be reached under the provisions of Standing Orders 78(1) or 78(2) with respect to the second reading stage of Bill S-14, an act to amend the Corruption of Foreign Public Officials Act.

Under the provisions of Standing Order 78(3), I give notice that a minister of the Crown will propose at the next sitting a motion to allot a specific number of days or hours for the consideration and disposal of proceedings at the said stage.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The House appreciates the notice by the hon. government House leader.

REPORT STAGE

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-60, an act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 21, 2013 and other measures, as reported (without amendment) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak in favour of Bill C-60, the budget implementation bill and economic action plan 2013.

The opposition needs to get behind it, support it and get with it. The focus, of course, and it should be the focus, is what matters to most Canadians, and that is jobs, economic growth, and Canada's long-term prosperity.

In order for this to occur, and we hear this time and again from witnesses who appeared before our committee, we need infrastructure. Businesses need to function and expand. We need a tax system that would encourage business to grow and expand and invest. We also need the human resources, the people businesses need to provide a reasonable standard of service that we have grown to expect, to grow and expand their businesses, which in turn would provide for more jobs.

With respect to infrastructure, the economic action plan would provide the largest federal investment in job-creating infrastructure projects in Canadian history.

Since 2006, our government has made unprecedented investments in over 43,000 projects to build roads, bridges and other important infrastructure facilities.

In my riding, we have seen major water system upgrades in communities that wish to grow, but in order to do so, they need to upgrade their infrastructure.

In one case, they could not get approval for a subdivision until that infrastructure was agreed to.

It was water system upgrades in communities like Maryfield, Grenfell, Whitewood, Carlyle, Pangman and Stoughton and new sewer upgrades in places like Kipling and Moosomin.

In my consistency, we see new businesses in many small communities. We see the building of hotels, Subways, A&Ws and Tim Hortons to serve the boom taking place in the oil and gas industry. We also have potash mines, coal mining and a vibrant agricultural industry. We have also invested in recreational and public facilities.

All of this works together like a jigsaw puzzle to provide for economic growth and long-term prosperity.

Economic action plan 2013 would build on our investments and would announce a new building Canada plan, the largest investment in job-creating infrastructure in Canadian history.

The new building Canada plan would have three main components. The community improvement fund of \$32.2 billion would consist of an indexed gas tax fund and the increased GST rebate for municipalities to build roads, recreational facilities and other community infrastructure across Canada. It would also have the effect of improving the quality of life of Canadian families.

Government Orders

Second, the new building Canada fund of \$14 billion in support of major economic infrastructure projects would have a national and regional significance or scope. There would be a renewed P3 Canada fund to the extent of \$1.25 billion.

Overall, the new building Canada plan would include \$70 billion in federal infrastructure funding over 10 years.

Here is what the Federation of Canadian Municipalities had to say with respect to the budget 2013:

[It] delivers significant gains for Canada's cities and communities. We applaud the government for choosing to continue moving our communities forward even as it meets its immediate fiscal challenges....

It went on to say:

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.

Let me move to the third point, which is providing the human resources businesses need.

How do we meet the requirements of business, contractors and entrepreneurs who need both skilled and unskilled persons to maintain, grow and expand their business? Really, it requires a partnership of many stakeholders working together. In many cases, there needs to be more done to get students through high school, particularly in our first nation communities, to ensure that students have the literacy and numeracy competencies that are basic requirements to obtain jobs.

A greater emphasis is required to make known the skills and trades shortages in our schools and to encourage students to consider the trades as an option. Many of the jobs available are, indeed, very well-paying jobs.

● (2320)

Our government has invested billions of dollars in skills upgrading and training, particularly through federal-provincial labour market agreements, the older worker program, the employment insurance program and programs and support for under-represented groups.

The economic action plan introduced the Canada job grant, which provides up to \$15,000 per person with combined federal, provincial, territorial and employer funding to help people get the skills they need for in-demand jobs.

Licia Corbella, of the *Calgary Herald*, on March 23 stated in her article that Christopher Smillie, senior government relations adviser for the Canadian Building Trades of the AFL-CIO, had this to say: "Nothing is ever perfect but since when has a federal budget had so much in it about skilled trades".

She adds:

Smillie says reports indicate that unless decisive action is taken now, Canada will face a shortage of 300,000 skilled tradespeople by 2017. Try building the Keystone XL pipeline then without all those labourers like carpenters, electricians, pipefitters, plumbers, welders and others....Smillie says this makes sense and will avoid job funding from winding up in a province's general revenue fund or towards training more dental hygienists when what is needed is more welders and plumbers.

It means that people will be trained for specific jobs which is a good thing. By attaching the money to an employer it means the worker will be trained for a job that actually exists. It's about time this kind of common-sense approach was implemented...

Building on all these initiatives, we have made improvements for apprentices and employers in the apprenticeship program. Economic action plan 2013 supports the use of apprentices in federal construction and maintenance contracts. Our government will also ensure that funds transferred to provinces and territories through investment in the affordable housing program support the use of apprentices. As part of the new building Canada plan for infrastructure, the government will encourage provinces, territories and municipalities to support the use of apprentices in infrastructure projects receiving federal funding.

The Association of Canadian Community Colleges had this to say in its March 21, news release:

Federal commitments in Budget 2013 will encourage a reduction in barriers to Canada's economic success, while maximizing the talents and advanced skills of Canadians. Virtually every opportunity that we suggested for addressing the skills shortage has been embraced...

Another source of human resources is through immigration. The use of the provincial nominee program in Saskatchewan provides an opportunity to attract the skilled people the province needs that will help it to continue to grow.

Going forward, our Minister of Immigration has indicated a new and innovative expression of interest to the immigration management system, which will allow for Canadian employers in provinces and territories to select skilled immigrants from a pool of applicants that best meets Canada's economic need.

However, all of this still does not meet all the needs we have. We need to look at ways and means to provide those through the temporary foreign workers program.

I have a letter that was written to me by a small business in southeastern Saskatchewan. It says:

We are a small community in the South East corner of the province with a population of approximately 960 people. We have been experiencing an oil boom in this region for the last 5 years and during this time I have witnessed dramatic reduction in the amount of applications for jobs posted within our organization. The jobs I mentioned are not always level entry positions but range from cashiers to supervisors and onto management positions.

Basically, what he is saying is that when all of the partners involved have done everything that they can do in places where there is a booming economy, in places where the unemployment rate is very low, we must still rely on the temporary foreign workers program. We must remember that.

Bill C-60 deals with the abuses of the program. Most can accept the fact that we need to deal with the abuses, including a small fee that would be charged for labour market opinions and permits. I think most businesses are prepared to pay that fee providing they get the service that one would expect.

● (2325)

The budget implementation bill addresses what we need for our economy to continue to grow, for us to continue to prosper and for jobs to continue to be created.

Government Orders

• (2330)

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to my colleague's speech, especially when he talked about temporary foreign workers and pipeline construction. Could he elaborate on this a bit?

I know the government is very keen to push pipelines through British Columbia, as well as the Keystone XL pipeline. Of the jobs it is promising in these proposals, how many of these construction jobs on these pipelines would be filled by temporary foreign workers?

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: Mr. Speaker, the temporary foreign workers are meant to work where there are key shortages for labour, when the positions cannot be filled by Canadians who are able to provide the service they need. That must happen first and foremost. If there are skilled people, then they would be hired.

It is only after employers have shown they have tried everything they can and cannot find people here, or cannot train them quickly enough, or provide them through the incentive grants that we have provided and when they have done everything and there still is a shortage and it will either go forward with the business or discontinue the business, will they rely on temporary foreign workers.

In fact, in the letter I was going to quote from, but we ran out of time, he said that he would have to probably close one part of his operation because he did not have the ability to service those people and that would affect its entire operation.

If we go the NDP way and not provide the human resources, tax and spend, we will drive our economy into the ground. What we are doing is continuing on the proper path.

Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have an easy question because the member during his speech was doing a promotional ad for the Conservative budget. I now have an opportunity to ask a question. Just like in the ads, maybe we will get some feedback.

In the ads, the Conservatives specifically talk about training credits, but it says provided there is parliamentary approval. Let us say we will get parliamentary approval. Could the member tell me exactly on what date will this program be applicable to my constituents? My understanding is that it will take two to three years before it even comes into force.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: Mr. Speaker, if I were to give him the precise date, what would happen then?

We heard other speakers say that we needed to negotiate, talk and discuss. We spent billions of dollars on the labour market agreements with the provinces, specifically in relation to skills training and upgrading. This program is one that will have discussion with the players involved, with other stakeholders, with the provinces—

Mr. Massimo Pacetti: So for two, three years or four to seven years, there is no program?

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: Mr. Speaker, I can assure the member, there will be a significant amount of dollars spent to ensure that when people get trained there will be a job for them. In other words, there is a job waiting to be filled and this will help that job be filled by ensuring we are training the people for the skills that are required by

the workplace. That should be a common sense kind of approach. In fact, one of the people who spoke with respect to this said, "Finally we get some common sense going into the equation". We will see the details when everyone has come to agreement on that.

Hon. Lynne Yelich (Minister of State (Western Economic Diversification), CPC): Mr. Speaker, while the member is on a roll talking about how good our budget plan is for 2013, perhaps he would like to expand on what we are doing for small business, for example, the hiring tax credit or the accelerated capital cost?

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: Mr. Speaker, the accelerated capital cost is being very well received by businesses because it encourages them to buy the needed equipment and assets to better operate their business more efficiently and to provide jobs. They are able to get a tax writeoff in a quicker fashion than normal.

If people are in manufacturing and they wish to expand their plants and buy new equipment, this is the kind of thing that will make the manufacturers do that. They would have a more efficient business, a business that was able to expand and hire more people.

Those are the kinds of things that give initiative and impetus to the economy, the kinds of things that we need to see. It is one of many of them. If we look at the entire budget implementation bill, we would see a series of actions taken in the direction of creating jobs, long-term prosperity and a better country in which to live.

• (2335)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse (Louis-Saint-Laurent, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is my turn to speak to Bill C-60. I would like to begin by saying that the people of Louis-Saint-Laurent are clearly not well served by the Conservatives' latest attempt to perform what the party seems to think are miracles.

Our riding is economically diverse, and I can say with certainty that none of us are happy with Bill C-60. I believe that is a significant indicator. I would like to thank all of the people in my riding who took the time to express their thoughts on this bill.

Here we are once again dealing with an omnibus bill, as heavy as an Incan inscription and just as impenetrable. The message behind Bill C-60 comes at an opportune moment in Canadian political history. The Conservatives are bound and determined to pass omnibus bills because they come to power only once every 35 years and have to focus on forcing these massive bills through. Clearly, that is their only hope.

Government Orders

The Reform Party can be proud of the fact that it managed to make itself a part of actual history. It became more than just a regional party. Good job, guys. Bill C-60 is the third omnibus bill that the Conservative government has thrust into the court of public opinion. At this point in time, I think there is one question we should be asking ourselves. Why did the government not bundle all of these measures into its first budget, Bill C-38? The Conservatives would have won the dubious honour of having created the biggest bill ever introduced. They could have given us a super-omnibus bill to solve all of Canada's problems in one fell swoop.

No matter what the Conservatives say, this budget will stall Canada's economy, not revive it. Budget 2013 will eliminate thousands of jobs, cut direct program spending and slow GDP growth considerably.

The government is putting positive spin on its measures so that it can spread devastation. This trademark Conservative lack of nuance, its black-or-white mentality, has plagued us for eight years. The Conservatives use the word "growth" to hide basic corporate interests.

The only thing that will grow with Bill C-60 is the Conservatives' ego, as well as the size of the attendant ethics scandals.

Although some of my colleagues have mentioned it, it bears repeating that the Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer stated that these cuts are completely unnecessary to restore the structural budget surplus.

I am not in the habit of accusing the Conservative government of indulge in demagoguery in my speeches, but this time, as I said before, the ruling party has been overtaken by its own folly. Given that wages are stagnating, jobs are unstable and average households and individuals are heavily in debt, why is this cutthroat dollars and cents approach overriding everything?

Canada is not just a collection of economic indicators to be manipulated. It is first and foremost the sum of its people. When it comes to the economy, the Conservative message is clear: economic survival or economic weakness. To them, all Canadians owe their living to the economy.

Depriving people of the means to achieve economic success is a misguided approach. People are the basis of the economy, not the reverse. Economic indicators that now seem so meaningful and crucial will not be voting in 2015. It is the very people the government has abandoned who will undo legislation like Bill C-60.

Since we are on the topic, Bill C-60 obviously meddles in a wide range of separate and unrelated issues, each time with the government's pervasive iron fist.

For example, and this did not go unnoticed by the public, a number of crown corporations will have their ability to bargain collectively eroded, practically stripped away. From now on, during negotiations, our crown corporations will have to deal with unavoidable advice from the President of the Treasury Board, who will sit at the head of the table, as proud as Bashar al-Assad. There will be no getting away from this oh-so-valuable government input. Is that supposedly august presence really necessary?

No, but while we are at it, we might as well follow through with that logic. We should create a department to oversee union negotiations. After all, Canada's future depends on it. Talk about ridiculous.

The Conservatives are keeping up their attacks on Canadian workers, believing they will win over an undetermined social class to which no one belongs. It is like the *Arabian Nights*, but without the magic, because the magic has run out.

In the last budget, the Minister of Finance, gleaming like Prosecco, used a very effective diversion tactic. When he was announcing the convoluted content of Bill C-38, he announced that he would eliminate the penny. That was the price they had to pay for getting Canadians to accept the enormity of the bill. Just like that, it all came down to getting rid of the penny. The Conservatives took on a modern look for a very low price.

This year they are coming back with a budget bill every bit as big and callous, but without the handy distraction the penny provided. However, the metaphor lives on: Bill C-60 will not grow the economy by a single penny.

● (2340)

Bill C-60 is just a litany of punitive measures against workers and crown corporations and a series of tariff adjustments that, at the end of the day, will have no major impact on people's budgets in this country.

The figures quoted by the Parliamentary Budget Officer amaze me. In total, budgets 2012 and 2013 will slash 67,000 jobs, which in turn will trigger a 0.57% drop in the GDP, as one might expect. If we compare those figures with the rhetoric the Conservative government has been spewing ad nauseam about creating hundreds of thousands of jobs since the recession, we see that this is total madness.

My impression is that the 900,000 jobs that the government has created—because I believe that is the new number members are using these days—are in China, not here. That is wonderful for China, but when the manufacturing sector in Ontario completely disappears, like the Etruscans, what then? Does Bill C-60 try to remedy this situation? The question remains, but I believe that the bill speaks for itself, and it is quite sad.

As we have already said, the NDP strongly opposes the idea of omnibus bills like this one, legislative measures that, frankly, are offensive because of their size and how underhanded they are. The government wants to quickly pass legislation on very complex issues that are not even connected to one another, for the sole purpose of being able to boast about having done it. It is irresponsible and childish.

The NDP would never do that to Canadian voters. However, I am afraid the precedent has been firmly set and the Liberals will be thrilled to take their turn if they ever regain a shred of power.

As we have heard over and over, the Conservative government wants to sneak things through right under our noses by ordering the drafting of these kinds of omnibus bills. However, it will not work. We sit down and dissect them for hours on end. We find all their flaws, large and small. The Conservatives cannot fool us. Everyone knows what they are trying to do. Perhaps the government thinks that it has managed to completely mislead voters with its cryptic manoeuvres. Perhaps it thinks that it will have its cake and eat it too, and then sell it back again at a profit. However, that is not what is going on. The official opposition sees right through the government's game, and the people are fully aware that the Conservatives are trying to trick them.

In Brazil, the word “omnibus” means “public transit”. In this case, that is quite appropriate, because I have a feeling that in 2015, many members across the floor will have to use public transit to get to work. However, the members opposite need not worry, since I am sure they will be able to find something among the 900,000 jobs they supposedly created. I find it appalling that this government has so little regard for workers, people who can never take advantage of the measures in the budget.

The government does not seem to understand that there is an emerging middle class in this country. Even though these people make up the majority of Canadians, the government continues to ignore their interests, while claiming to defend them. That is deplorable.

Bill C-60 shows little respect for the average Canadian and the provinces fare no better, as was to be expected. The bill hits too close to home.

Without any excuse or explanation, the Conservatives are attacking a program that all of Quebec is extremely fond of. The Fonds de solidarité FTQ is a national resource for all Quebecers, and it cannot be attacked with impunity.

Our province has developed its economy in a competitive, imaginative and sustainable way through the use of the FTQ fund. By attacking this fund, the Conservative government is attacking Quebec itself. I would really like the five Quebec Conservative MPs to have the courage to rise and defend this deplorable decision while they still have the opportunity to represent Quebecers in the House of Commons. I know my people, and this is the final nail in the coffin for Quebecers' dalliance with the Conservative Party.

I cannot refrain from using an accusatory tone in my speech because I am speaking on behalf of my generation, young people between the ages of 18 and 35, who are not fooled by the monumental fast one that the government is pulling on our society for mercenary interests. It is my duty to speak for those who do not have the opportunity to sit in the House. The young people of this society, who the Conservative government tries so hard to control, has such drive that all the C-38s, C-45s and C-60s are so ridiculous as to be offensive.

Young Canadians must not be underestimated. The government would not believe what our young people are capable of. Look at what Turkish youth are doing right now. What will the Prime Minister do if the tenor of the Quebec protests convinces the rest of the country? Is he, too, waiting for his Taksim square?

Government Orders

[The member spoke in another language.]

[English]

Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I really do not have a question for my hon. colleague regarding her speech, but I do have a concern about the integrity of our debate.

I am certain that the Minister of Finance would have no problem with being referred to as gleaming like Prosecco, but to deal with the arguments rather than the personalities would be important for really raising the level of debate here.

Comparing anybody to Bashar al-Assad is really over the top. I would give the member the opportunity to withdraw that.

● (2345)

[Translation]

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse: Mr. Speaker, there is nothing insulting about saying that someone is gleaming like Prosecco. I think it is rather nice and is an amusing comparison.

As for Bashar al-Assad, I am not comparing him to anyone here. I do not think that anyone in the House is at that level, obviously.

However, it is important to preserve the integrity of our union negotiations. It is very important that these people are able to negotiate in a clear and simple manner. It is unacceptable for the government to respond that that is not how it works and that it will sit down at the table and negotiate for them.

The government should reconsider the decisions it makes in its budget bills.

[English]

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my community needs jobs. Each day at least one young person calls our office looking for work, and we help young people find jobs week after week. The youth unemployment rate remains a staggering 14.2%, nearly twice the rate for other Canadians. Today, 404,000 young people lack a job and another 171,000 have simply given up and dropped out of the labour market.

Bill C-60 creates an illusion of action regarding jobs and training. The government proposes to claw back \$2.5 billion per year in labour market money, which it now sends to the provinces, and renegotiate it with provincial governments. This amounts to recycling of existing money.

I am wondering if the member sees anything new, any additional funding, when it comes to job creation.

[Translation]

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse: Mr. Speaker, I sincerely thank my colleague from Etobicoke North for her question.

She brought up one of the biggest problems right now with the youth unemployment rate. She explained very well that a number of young people from my generation are having a very hard time finding work. As she said, this bill creates an illusion of stimulating job creation, but it is all smoke and mirrors.

Government Orders

The reality is that companies are sitting on hundreds of billions of dollars and they do not have any real incentive to reinvest that money in creating jobs. In reality, no jobs are being created, and this is all a bunch of nonsense.

It is as though the government is giving a cake to one person and some crumbs to another. If I say that that is an injustice, will the government criticize me and say that I do not want to give that person those crumbs? That is crazy.

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent for her excellent speech. I understand that her riding also includes an aboriginal community.

It seems to me that there is nothing in this budget to address the real and urgent needs when it comes to housing, drinking water, infrastructure and schools. Am I mistaken? The 30% gap between funding for aboriginal children on reserves and that for children elsewhere in the provinces is still there.

Am I wrong? Is there anything in this budget to address this?

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, the member for Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, for his question. He raised a very valid point.

Yet again, there are no measures for first nations or to close this ever-present gap in education, access to drinking water and many other areas of concern.

Recently in Montreal, for a while people had to boil their water to make it drinkable. Everyone was angry and said that this did not make sense, yet that is the reality facing tens of thousands of people in our own country.

Very little is being done to try to help these people and close this completely unacceptable gap. There is nothing in this bill that addresses these problems. Once again, it is a major omission, and this will not work.

• (2350)

[English]

Mr. Chungsen Leung (Parliamentary Secretary for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what a pleasure it is to be speaking so close to the hour of midnight. I think this is probably one of the few times I have had this opportunity to speak this late at night. Let it not be said that members of Parliament do not work hard in this country. I have visited many parliaments around the world, and this is one of the finest examples of Canadian democracy at work.

Let me be the first to say the words “omnibus bill” have been bantered around. I take exception to that. I do not think omnibus bill is a bad descriptor of what we are trying to do here. However, in my consultations with the business community in my riding of Willowdale, the omnibus bill really is not what is said. We call this a comprehensive bill, a bill that looks at every single aspect of Canadian human resources, of capital resources, of intellectual resources, our natural resources and how we tie all that together to make this country work.

I will go through some small concerns I have with our bill. I appreciate the opportunity to talk today to Bill C-60. Economic

action plan 2013 is a positive plan that is focused on creating jobs, promoting growth and supporting long-term prosperity.

As Canadians know, our global economic reputation is strong. Canada has earned the trust of global investors for its responsible fiscal, economic and financial sector management. Canada is alone among the G7 countries to receive the highest possible credit rating from all the major credit rating agencies, which contributes to low borrowing costs.

As a recent *Toronto Sun* editorial noted:

Since the Tories took over, no other G-7 country has surpassed Canada in per capita job growth. Canada has added 1.5 million net jobs since 2006.

...Canada is in good shape compared to all the other industrialized countries of the West.

The economic action plan 2013 would strengthen this record with actions in all areas that drive economic progress and prosperity by connecting Canadians with available jobs, helping manufacturers and businesses succeed in the global economy, creating a new building Canada plan, investing in world-class research and innovation, and supporting families and communities.

While it is gratifying to highlight Canada's economic strengths, we recognize that Canada still faces a challenging global economic environment. Today's legislation would help to address these concerns.

First, for instance, communities would benefit from Bill C-60 through investments that address accessibility and affordability of housing. Our government has made a firm commitment to ensuring low-income families have access to quality affordable housing. Two major Government of Canada housing initiatives are set to expire in 2014: the investment in affordable housing and the homelessness partnering strategy. Since 2008, these programs have provided significant financial support to provinces, territories and communities to increase accessibility and affordability of housing for low-income Canadians.

To ensure we continue to meet these needs, our government would renew its commitment to the investment in affordable housing and the homelessness partnering strategy with a nearly \$2 billion investment. This new investment has been welcomed by many across Canada for both the amount of the investment and its length.

Indeed, here is what Habitat for Humanity Canada had to say:

The...government's renewed investment in affordable housing comes as great news for low-income families looking to buy a safe, decent and affordable Habitat home.

Toronto city councillor Ana Bailao of ward 18, Davenport, who is the chair of the city council's affordable housing committee, commented, “We are very pleased to see (the programs) renewed, and for a five-year term, which is the longest we have ever seen”.

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In addition, economic action plan 2013 proposes to support the construction of new housing units in Nunavut, which faces unique challenges in providing affordable housing due to its climate, geography and dispersed population.

Helping individuals and families obtain affordable housing and avoid homelessness creates broader economic benefits for all Canadians.

On another subject we will be protecting our environment, which brings me to my next point. Protecting the health and well-being of Canadians by promoting a clean and sustainable environment is a key priority for our government. Canada's unique natural heritage contributes to a high quality of life for Canadians today and in the future. That is why the legislation before us would provide \$20 million for the Nature Conservancy of Canada to continue to conserve ecologically sensitive land.

● (2355)

Support for the Nature Conservancy of Canada would allow the organization to protect Canada's most important natural areas and the species they sustain by continuing to conserve ecologically sensitive land under the natural areas conservation program.

Additional funds for conservation would be leveraged by requiring each federal dollar to be matched by two dollars in new funding from other sources, creating even greater value from taxpayer dollars. It is measures like these that will significantly enhance Canada's long-term economic sustainability by supporting a healthy environment.

Before I conclude, let me touch on two more key initiatives that represent investments in our communities.

First, economic action plan 2013 would introduce a temporary first-time donor's super credit designed to encourage new donors to give to charities. The FDSC would increase the value of the federal charitable donations tax credit by 25 percentage points if neither the taxpayer nor his or her spouse has claimed the credit since 2007. The FDSC will apply on up to \$1,000 in cash donations claimed in respect of any one taxation year from 2013 to 2017.

This new credit would significantly enhance the attractiveness of donating to a charity for young Canadians who are in a position to make donations for the first time. By helping to rejuvenate and expand the charitable sector's donor base, it would have an immediate impact on supporting that sector.

Second, to address the needs of Canadians with a print disability, such as an impairment of sight, today's act proposes funding of \$3 million in 2013-14 for the Canadian National Institute for the Blind in support of a national digital hub. Incidentally, the Canadian National Institute for the Blind is in a riding just south of my riding.

The national office of the Canadian National Institute for the Blind is located in Toronto, but the services of the organization, including the digital hub, benefit Canadians across the country. The CNIB's national digital hub would provide improved access to library materials for Canadians who are blind or partially sighted, supporting their ongoing educational development and their quality of life. This would allow the institute to increase the number of new

titles available to the print-disabled and would increase the number of end-users benefiting from the national digital hub.

Finally, I would be remiss if I closed without quickly reviewing other important initiatives in Bill C-60. They include providing funding of \$3 million over three years to the Pallium Foundation of Canada to support the delivery of training in palliative care to front-line health care providers; expanding tax relief for home care services; and improving the integrity of the tax system by, for example, streamlining the process for the CRA to obtain information concerning unnamed persons from third parties, such as banks.

As I noted this evening, economic action plan 2013 contains a host of benefits for every part of the country. Through this comprehensive and ambitious plan, we will maintain and strengthen our advantages by continuing to pursue those strategies that made us so resilient in the first place: being responsible, being disciplined and being determined.

This act marks an import milestone and the next step in creating a brighter future for our country. I urge members opposite and all members of this House to get behind this legislation and get it passed so that it can do just that and put Canada in a position to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I understand that the members over there on the Conservative side do not actually prepare their notes. They are given to them by the Prime Minister's Office, but for the member to try to pretend that somehow the government has been good for the environment just defies any reasonable logic.

We saw in the budget bill, according to the Commissioner of the Environment, that the government has gutted 99% of environmental evaluations in this country, which is completely irresponsible.

We have climate-change deniers sitting on the front benches of the Conservative Party. I want to give the member an opportunity. I understand that he did not write the speech. However, for goodness' sake, just to come clean, can he confirm what the environment commissioner said, which is that 99% of environmental evaluations have been eliminated by the government in such an irresponsible way?

Mr. Chungsen Leung: On the contrary, Mr. Speaker, I think the member opposite is quite wrong in his consideration of what we are not doing for the environment. We have certainly expanded the Nature Conservancy of Canada's role. We have provided it with more money.

As a director of the Toronto regional conservation area, we are able to maintain many of the greenbelts around Toronto, such as the Oak Ridges Moraine, which lies just north of Toronto. We are, with the province and Parliament, protecting these.

I think we are certainly doing our work in ensuring that species at risk are being studied and that we know how to preserve them for future generations.

● (2400)

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to pick up on the previous member's question.

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The current Conservative government has an appalling record on the environment. It has gutted 50 years of environmental legislation, repealed the Kyoto Protocol Implementation Act, gutted the Fisheries Act and went from protecting 32,000 lakes in this country to 97.

The 2008 Climate Change Performance Index ranked Canada 56th of 57 countries. In 2009, the Conference Board of Canada ranked Canada 15th of 17 wealthy industrialized nations. In 2010, Simon Fraser University ranked Canada 24th of 25 OECD countries, and I could go on.

Mr. Chungsen Leung: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for her concern about the environment.

In all countries around the world, we need to balance the environment with the economy. If the economy is not working, it just means further degradation of the environment because there will be less money earned in the economy to do the work that we need to do.

We can see this throughout the development of the 18th and 19th centuries. People started using the environment for economic means, which meant a certain amount of degradation in the economy. We have now reached a point where we know that in a sustainable economy we now have the funds to go back and repair the wrongs of the past.

Ms. Michelle Rempel (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was wondering if my colleague would comment on the fact that our government has been the first government to see the growth of greenhouse gas emissions drop while the economy continued to grow. Contrast that to the Liberal government, which saw over a 30% rise in greenhouse gas emissions. To be quite honest, I do not see any results tied to the NDP environmental plan. Our plan has one that actually sees results.

On other statistics, there is the money we have put into funding for cleanup in the Great Lakes and the increase in Canada's parks system by over 50%, which includes Rouge National Park.

Perhaps my colleague opposite could reduce some of the rhetoric that we are hearing on the other side on this file.

Mr. Chungsen Leung: Mr. Speaker, I am quite pleased that the Rouge National Park was established as a park by our Conservative government. It is the first time that we actually brought the environment to an urban centre to show people the value of what the environment can do for us.

With respect to Kyoto, I was involved in that. I was in Japan at a time when the Kyoto accord was signed. At the time I thought that it was an impossible task. I wondered why we were signing onto it when there was no hope of ever meeting those standards. I think the Conservative government is much more realistic with the direction we are heading in for the environment.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Raynault (Joliette, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is somewhat funny to be speaking to Bill C-60 at this time of night, in the climate of crisis we are seeing here in Ottawa these days. The current context is no accident. It was brought on by the irresponsible actions of the Conservative government. Greed and partisanship have taken over the Senate because the Conservatives let their

supporters get away with too much. This comes at a time when they are asking Canadians to tighten their belts. Oh the irony.

Yet again, we are having to vote hastily on an omnibus bill that amends 49 laws at once. We have learned that 67,000 Canadians will lose their jobs because of this budget, which will also result in a 0.57% decrease in GDP. The fact that the Parliamentary Budget Officer stated that this budget would set the Canadian economy back does not seem to interest the Conservatives. Neither are they interested in impartial information indicating that austerity measures were not necessary for a balanced budget.

The Conservatives are like children who cannot wait for Christmas. They want immediate results because they know that is the only thing they can hope to give to Canadians in preparation for the next election.

This short-term vision does not hide the harsh reality that is catching up with the country and driving down productivity. The Conservatives' amateur approach knows no bounds. If members compare the Minister of Finance's expectations for 2012 with what actually happened, they will understand what I mean. He missed the mark by 35% when it came to economic growth. Is that one of the results of the "science-based approach" the Conservatives are always bragging about?

Given that they question climate change and cut scientists' jobs to keep the truth hidden, it is certainly not surprising that they make up stories about the economy as well. In 2012, Canada's trade deficit hit \$67 billion, a real record. Economists predict that the country's performance in 2013 will be even worse.

Obsessed with getting re-elected, the Conservative government is not hesitating to raise taxes in as many areas as possible. It is hard to imagine that a government could be crooked enough to impose additional taxes on bicycles and hospital parking. Only a small group of mean-spirited people could think up such schemes to rob Canadians of \$8 billion.

The Conservatives' image is becoming increasingly sullied, but fortunately, more and more Canadians are realizing it. The image of strict managers that they like to brag about is becoming so preposterous that it is hard not to laugh at it.

Indeed, people understand that they need to be wary of a government that tells its citizens to tighten their belts, while it appoints three new ministers with car allowances. Funniest of all is the fact that these three ministers will have to manage departments with significantly reduced budgets.

Bill C-60 will also allow the Treasury Board to intervene in the collective bargaining negotiations of crown corporations, at any stage in the process. This provision completely contravenes the independence of crown corporations and will certainly cause difficulties for all sectors, which will translate into fewer services for Canadians. It will be even worse for non-unionized employees. Indeed, the Treasury Board will be able to change their working conditions at any time.

How about a little pay cut right before Christmas for Mr. Johnson? How about cancelling the vacation time that Ms. Tremblay had approved months ago?

Such measures will affect all Canadians. We have already seen the Conservative government intervene in favour of management during many collective bargaining processes in the past.

• (2405)

This time, we have reached a whole new level, and workers risk losing their hard earned gains in a number of sectors.

The Stalinist control over crown corporations simply confirms that the Conservatives are more controlling than they care to admit, because by doing so, they would show that they think that what belongs to the state belongs to them as the government. However, for decades, the thinking in Canada has been that crown corporations ultimately belong to the public and must operate completely independently to avoid interference and exploitation by unsavoury governments.

It is also ironic to watch diehard Conservatives vote for provisions that increase their governmental power and, at the same time, relax the rules for foreign entities to acquire Canadian companies. We saw that with the purchase of Nexen by a Chinese state-owned corporation. It is now possible for a foreign country to buy a small piece of Canada, to have its own people work there and to be totally above Canadian laws. We will see more and more cases like Nexen, where a more intelligent country's government might slip in a clause preventing Canadians from taking their company to court even though it is operating on Canadian soil. When it comes to the Conservatives, impunity is guaranteed for senators and foreigners, but not for the public.

The banks were already making enough profit by charging people interest that is not subject to any tax. Now the Conservatives have given the banks an advantage over credit unions. The credit unions will have to pay a new tax, and this will also speed up the financial concentration that plagues this country.

These types of measures reveal who the Conservatives are really working for. Canadians' debt level has reached 167%. Prices are increasing on everything, and job security has never been so fragile as 1,400,000 people are out of work. In this climate, people do not dare spend as much as before because they believe that they will not be able to afford to spend one day.

Unfortunately, it would seem that only senators and ministers have job security in this country.

Fortunately for everyone, MPs have to be elected, and when the time comes to vote I hope that the members opposite will start to fear for their jobs because they could be harshly judged by Canadians.

At this juncture, the legal dispute involving the former parliamentary budget officer has still not been resolved. This dispute arose because of the 2012 budget. Passing a new budget implementation bill in this context casts a dark shadow on the financial security of the country under the rule of the Conservatives.

My own doubts were transformed into certainty long ago. The Conservatives are leading us right toward a cliff. I take comfort in knowing that the people will judge them, but I am sorry that they will never have to be accountable for the terrible things they have done to this country because of their narrow, unsatisfactory

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economic ideology. This government's choices are absolutely irresponsible and will cost us all dearly for years to come.

If it is any consolation, Bill C-60 does include a few measures that the NDP called for, such as tax credits for adoption and first-time donors. Those are positives, but there are too few of them and they are too small to make up for all of the terrible measures in this bill.

• (2410)

[*English*]

Ms. Candice Bergen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to my hon. colleague's speech. It seemed to be filled with words like “fear”, “judgment” and “hitting brick walls”; very negative language.

What concerns me, and what I would like this hon. member to answer is this. Do the NDP members have any positive ideas to help grow the economy, to address the labour market skills shortage in this country or to create jobs and expand opportunities, or is the only answer they have to be negative, to travel to the U.S. and denigrate our industries and our chances for economic growth in Canada, and to bury their heads in the sand when it comes to the labour market in Canada?

Does that member have one positive idea to bring forward? When people have no good ideas, all they do is insult. I heard no positive ideas.

• (2415)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Raynault: Mr. Speaker, yes, the NDP does have a positive idea. Earlier, one of the government members talked about the worker shortage in her province, but the employment insurance reform will eliminate jobs in Quebec and the maritime provinces, or in other words, in eastern Canada.

Is this employment insurance reform, which will hurt Quebec and the maritime provinces, designed to force people to move west?

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what is worse is that the government launched an ad campaign for a program that does not even exist, for a Canada-wide job training program that it has not even started to negotiate with the provinces or the private sector.

Since it took power, this government has spent \$100 million a year on advertising. That is \$100,000 for every 30-second ad during the NHL playoffs.

Could the member talk about how wasteful this kind of spending is, especially when there is no shortage of demands and needs in Canadian society?

Ms. Francine Raynault: Mr. Speaker, the government has spent a huge amount of money to advertise programs that do not exist. I think that money should have been used for existing needs, to help unemployed workers and our businesses.

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Do they have rights like those of the big corporations that come here and can do what they want when they want with human resources and the natural resources we have yet to share with the aboriginal peoples?

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Joliette for her speech.

With one omnibus bill a year, I think we could at least expect the government to be consistent from one omnibus bill to the next.

I have a hard time understanding how in one bill it can tell Canadian seniors that they will not only have to wait another two years to retire, but they will also have to properly prepare. Then, in the next omnibus bill the government tells them that it is doing away with the benefit provided by labour-sponsored funds, one of the best tools they have to plan for retirement.

Am I missing something there? Does that make sense?

Ms. Francine Raynault: Mr. Speaker, just like my colleague, I cannot follow the logic. There are things I cannot understand because the fund works very well in Quebec.

The Conservatives are increasing the retirement age by two years, cutting employment insurance, and forcing people to work for 70% of their salary and then turning around and telling people to prepare for retirement.

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois proposed three substantial amendments to this bill. I would like to hear what the member has to say about these three amendments.

Ms. Francine Raynault: Mr. Speaker, we will probably be voting on these amendments shortly. He will have our answer shortly.

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Before I recognize the hon. member for Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, I will let the hon. member know there are only three minutes remaining in the time allocated for government orders.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale.

Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the House for having the opportunity to speak in the last few minutes to Bill C-60.

I ask my colleagues to look at the economic impact of high debt and deficits on economies in the eurozone and U.S. and they will see that this issue really matters.

Canada's net debt to GDP ratio is 36%, the lowest level among G7 countries, with Germany being the second lowest at 58% and the G7 average 80%. Spending on federal government operations is projected to remain below 2010 levels for the next five years.

Budget 2013 would reduce government spending by an additional \$1.7 billion by examining departmental spending, reducing travel costs with the use of technology such as video conferencing, shifting to electronic publishing and making print publications the exception and closing tax loopholes to ensure everyone pays their fair share.

We are doing this while at the same time making new and prudent investments in things like skills training, the new \$15,000 Canada job grant, to help more Canadians find high quality, well-paying jobs, the new iteration of the building Canada fund with infrastructure investments of \$70 billion and assisting the manufacturing sector with accelerated capital cost allowance.

Another important point that I did not hear this evening was increasing social and economic inclusion of persons with disabilities with a new \$222 million investment on top of the existing \$40 million.

There is a lot in Bill C-60 that I could speak about but my time is limited tonight. I encourage all members in the House to vote for this measure to ensure that all Canadians benefit from it as quickly as possible.

● (2420)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): It being 12:22 a.m., pursuant to an order made earlier today it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the report stage of the bill now before the House.

The question is on Motion No. 1. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The recorded division on Motion No. 1 stands deferred.

The next question is on Motion No. 2. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): In my opinion the nays have it.

Government Orders

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The recorded division on Motion No. 2 stands deferred. In addition, the recorded division will also apply to Motion No. 3.

[*Translation*]

The next question is on Motion No. 6. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): In my opinion, the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The recorded division on the motion stands deferred, and the recorded division will also apply to Motions Nos. 7 to 11.

[*English*]

The next question is on Motion No. 12. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The recorded division on Motion No. 12 stands deferred. The recorded division will also apply to Motions Nos. 13 to 15.

The next question is on Motion No. 16. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The recorded division on Motion No. 16 stands deferred.

● (2425)

The next question is on Motion No. 17. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The recorded division on the motion stands deferred.

The recorded division will also apply to Motions Nos. 18 and 19.

[*Translation*]

The next question is on Motion No. 20. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The recorded division on Motion No. 20 stands deferred.

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The recorded division will also apply to Motions Nos. 24, 26, 27 and 29 to 36.

[*English*]

The next question is on Motion No. 37. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The recorded division on the motion stands deferred.

The recorded division will also apply to Motions Nos. 38 to 40.
[*Translation*]

The next question is on Motion No. 41. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The recorded division on Motion No. 41 stands deferred.

The recorded division will also apply to Motions Nos. 42 and 43.
[*English*]

The next question is on Motion No. 47. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The recorded division on the motion stands deferred.

The recorded division will also apply to Motions Nos. 48 to 59.
[*Translation*]

The next question is on Motion No. 60. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The recorded division on Motion No. 60 stands deferred.

The recorded division will also apply to Motions Nos. 61 to 71.
[*English*]

The next question is on Motion No. 72. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The recorded division on the motion stands deferred.

[Translation]

The question is on Motion No. 73. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): In my opinion the nays have it.

The recorded division on the motion stands deferred, and the recorded division will also apply to Motions Nos. 74 and 78 to 80.

• (2430)

[English]

Normally at this time the House would proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded divisions at report stage of the bill. However, pursuant to an order made Wednesday, May 22, the divisions stand deferred until Tuesday, June 4, at the expiry of the time provided for oral questions.

* * *

TAX CONVENTIONS IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2013

Hon. Peter Van Loan (for the Minister of Finance) moved that Bill S-17, An Act to implement conventions, protocols, agreements and a supplementary convention, concluded between Canada and Namibia, Serbia, Poland, Hong Kong, Luxembourg and Switzerland, for the avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to taxes, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Corneliu Chisu (Pickering—Scarborough East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted and pleased to rise in the House to kick off the debate on a rather technical and routine piece of legislation, Bill S-17, the tax conventions implementation act, 2013.

Before I begin, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Senate for its initial work on this bill. I especially want to thank the members of the Senate banking, trade and commerce committee for its thorough review of Bill S-17 earlier this year. I would also like to extend thanks to all the witnesses who appeared at that Senate committee, for their appearance and their high-quality testimony on a subject that can often be technical. For those wondering why this bill started in the Senate first, I should note that, going back to 1976, the convention has been to bring tax convention legislation to the Senate first. In fact, there have been 30 different pieces of tax convention legislation in front of Parliament since 1976.

As members are aware, Bill S-17 proposes to implement tax conventions or tax treaties, either new or updated, with Canada and

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the following countries: Namibia, Serbia, Poland, Hong Kong, Luxembourg and Switzerland. These new and updated treaties would augment Canada's strong network of tax treaties. Indeed, currently Canada has comprehensive tax treaties in place with 90 countries, one of the world's largest networks of bilateral tax treaties. This is an important feature of Canada's international tax system, a feature that is key to promoting our ability to compete.

What is more, we continue to work on agreements with other jurisdictions, as demonstrated in today's legislation. As part of Canada's ongoing effort to update and modernize our network of income tax treaties, Bill S-17 would achieve two important objectives. First, it would help combat tax evasion by ensuring Canada works with other countries to stop tax cheats. Second, it would help encourage global trade by preventing double taxation. Clearly, I would hope that all parliamentarians and all Canadians would agree that everyone should pay their fair share of taxes.

I think we are all agreed that it is not appropriate that some corporations would take advantage of Canada's tax rules to avoid paying their fair share, or that some wealthy individuals would use an offshore account to hide income tax or evade tax. We are against tax cheats because those tax cheats are essentially hiking taxes on honest Canadians. Honest, hard-working Canadians and small-business owners are left having to pay more taxes when cheats do not pay their fair share, and that is simply not fair.

However, to detect and deter those tax cheats, the Canada Revenue Agency needs to work with and share information with foreign tax agencies around the world. To this end, Canada supports the international consensus to work through the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, or OECD, to set an international tax information exchange standard. That standard is implemented under bilateral tax treaties and tax information exchange agreements like those new and updated treaties included in Bill S-17.

The second objective I mentioned referenced encouraging global trade by preventing double taxation. Here at home, our government has worked hard to cut taxes. In fact, we have done it 150 times, in every way government collects taxes, from the GST to personal tax to business tax and much more. We firmly believe that a more competitive tax system helps create an environment that enables Canada's entrepreneurs to excel, not a tax system that punishes entrepreneurs and stands in the way of their success, both here in Canada and abroad.

• (2435)

After all, if we want higher wages, more jobs and a higher standard of living, we need entrepreneurs to succeed and grow. That creates investment, jobs and helps make our communities stronger.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please. The hon. member for Pickering will have 15 minutes remaining.

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A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

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[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that you have adjourned the debates.

A few weeks ago, while workers in seasonal industries were deep in the black hole, the Conservatives tirelessly continued their disrespectful treatment of unemployed workers.

That was when we found out about a pilot project involving Service Canada inspectors conducting targeted, unannounced home visits to hunt down employment insurance fraudsters.

I immediately questioned the minister, not about the fact that we need to minimize fraud in the system as much as possible, but about how the Conservatives went about doing it and the means they used to achieve their ends.

The witch hunt that lasted all winter long, the duration of the pilot project, was reprehensible. It stigmatized unemployed workers by treating them like criminals and spread the Conservatives' ideological message that unemployed workers are gaming the system.

I have seen some parts of the document that ended up in the media. It was used by Service Canada investigators who are supposed to follow the government's directives. This document very clearly shows that, rather than a simple check, the questions more closely resemble an interrogation in which EI claimants are presumed guilty of fraud and must prove their innocence. Even our justice system does not work like that.

Furthermore, the document clearly encourages bureaucrats to assume the worst about unemployed Canadians and find fraud at every turn. This kind of investigation, which borders on bullying, places additional pressure on families that are already struggling and that are doing their best to find a work. They are trying to continue working in fundamental economic sectors and often live in our regions.

Everyone agrees that if we want to protect the fund and make the money available to those who need it most, we need to detect fraud. However, the Conservatives must find a better way to balance protecting our social safety net with respecting an individual's privacy.

This intimidating pressure only adds fuel to the fire. In addition to being unemployed and in an economically precarious situation, people are angry. When it was announced that inspectors would come by, demonstrations erupted in the Magdalen Islands to make the government understand that the inspectors were not welcome.

How can the government ensure the safety of federal agents when it sends them to work in such conditions? Can the government guarantee that the pilot project will not be renewed, and will it instead address the problems caused by its EI reform?

• (2440)

[English]

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of

Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is nothing secretive about our intent to prevent fraud and the abuse of taxpayers' money.

[Translation]

Part of the mandate of Service Canada's integrity services branch is to enforce the Employment Insurance Act and its regulations.

[English]

A number of provisions in the act refer to administrative penalties and restitutions. These provisions can be found under sections 38, 39, 65.1, 135, 136, 137 and 141.

The purpose of EI is to support those who have lost their job through no fault of their own.

[Translation]

Last year, Service Canada intercepted and stopped nearly half a billion dollars in ineligible payments. Public servants have a fundamental role to play in service to Canadians and their communities and in the public interest, in accordance with the law.

[English]

They have a responsibility to maintain the integrity of the programs and uphold the public trust. In all activities related to their professional duties, public servants must adhere to the values and ethics code of the public service.

We have an integrity function built into the system. Service Canada's integrity services branch is responsible for investigating client error, fraud and abuse. It ensures that clients receive the right benefits, at the right time, for the right purpose.

We have mechanisms to detect overpayments and stop any further incorrect payments. In short, when we find errors or abuses in the system, we put a stop to them, and less money is erroneously paid out.

As the member well knows, this is the money that has been entrusted to the government by workers and employers for the administration of the employment insurance system. It is our responsibility to ensure it is used correctly. The techniques we use to detect anomalies remain protected government information. We take any breach of information very seriously, and we act to prevent it from recurring.

Service Canada has a responsibility to find and stop inappropriate claims so that Canadians who have paid into the system can access these benefits when they need them.

[Translation]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: Mr. Speaker, allow me to point out how ironic it is of the Conservative government to use extremely severe and discriminatory methods against honest Canadians who are looking for work when the Prime Minister is prepared to defend his unelected senators, tooth and nail, until they are caught red-handed. Again, those senators are not even required to step down; yet, workers are subjected to very rigorous investigations and practically found guilty from the start. That is what we call a double standard.

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Another thing: workers and employers pay their premiums. The government has not been contributing to the employment insurance fund since the 1990s.

Canadians are fed up with these policies that favour cronies and go after honest workers. Honest workers are the ones who drive the economy. They are the ones who want good jobs. They are the ones who are the pride of our regions. They are the ones that run the seasonal sectors.

Canadians deserve better.

[*English*]

Ms. Kellie Leitch: Mr. Speaker, as I already mentioned, last year nearly half a billion dollars in ineligible payments were detected and stopped by Service Canada.

The purpose of EI is to support those who have lost their job due to no fault of their own.

Service Canada has been clear that it does not have quotas, as there are no consequences for not meeting service delivery targets.

Since 1993, officials have used targets to find and stop inappropriate claims, so that Canadians who have paid into the system can access these benefits when they need them.

We are committed to maintaining a fair and equitable EI system.

● (2445)

[*Translation*]

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, at this late hour I am pleased to have the opportunity to return to a question that I raised on March 21, when my colleague from Burnaby—Douglas and I condemned the Conservatives' war against science. The previous day, the entire Conservative caucus had voted against an NDP motion to defend publicly funded, basic scientific research.

I think it is worthwhile for me to read the motion in order to show that the Conservatives acted in bad faith when they voted against science. The motion stated:

That, in the opinion of the House: (a) public science, basic research and the free and open exchange of scientific information are essential to evidence-based policy-making; (b) federal government scientists must be enabled to discuss openly their findings with their colleagues and the public; and (c) the federal government should maintain support for its basic scientific capacity across Canada, including immediately extending funding, until a new operator is found, to the world-renowned Experimental Lakes Area Research Facility to pursue its unique research program.

As you can see, it was not a bad motion, yet the Conservatives voted against it.

Several things have changed since we debated this motion two months ago. For example, I am pleased to note that the Experimental Lakes Area research station has resumed its activities following an eleventh-hour intervention by the International Institute for Sustainable Development.

Also, in May, the Conservative government confirmed that it wanted the NRC to orient its priorities toward the needs of private

companies. No more basic research at the NRC. No more magnetic resonance research.

I should note that the Conservative government's decision to change tack and direct its investments toward commercial applications is contrary to the strategy adopted by champions of innovation.

I went to Washington last April to meet with senior American science policy officials. I found that they want to achieve a balanced approach. They believe that basic research and the social sciences are no less important than applied sciences. I read an interesting speech by President Obama on the subject. I would like to quote from that speech.

[*English*]

One of the things I have tried to do over the past four years and will continue to do over the next four years is to make sure that we are promoting the integrity of our scientific process, that not just in the physical and life sciences, but also in fields like psychology and anthropology and economics and political science—all of which are sciences because scholars develop and test hypotheses and subject them to peer review—but in all the sciences, we have got to make sure that we are supporting the idea that they are not subject to politics, that they're not skewed by an agenda, that, as I said before, we make sure that we go where evidence leads us. That's why we've got to keep investing in these sciences.

[*Translation*]

Since science exists in a world without borders, and since the Americans are our primary partners in science and innovation, I hope that the Conservative government will heed this call for wisdom and adopt a more balanced approach. The Science, Technology and Innovation Council released a report stating that, even though Canada ranked 16th in investment and research in 2005, it had fallen to 23rd place by 2011. That is the Conservatives' record on science and technology.

[*English*]

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to respond to the comments made earlier by the hon. member.

Since the Prime Minister launched our country's science and technology strategy in 2007, we have made substantial investments to strengthen Canada's research advantage. Since 2006, our government has provided more than \$9 billion in new resources to support science, technology and growth in innovative businesses. We have helped Canada attract and retain research talent and create a highly skilled workforce that is required for a more prosperous economy. In fact, over the past decade, we have seen a net migration of researchers into the country because of the tremendous opportunities available in Canada.

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Guided by our strategy, Canada has reached the top of the OECD's G7 rankings for higher education expenditures on R and D expressed as a percentage of GDP. Our government will continue to support freshwater research across the country. Since 2006, we have invested significantly to support science that is crucial to the long-term sustainability of Canada's oceans and resources. These investments have included the refurbishment of over a dozen labs, the construction of three science vessels, the completion of ocean mapping, support to commercial fishing in the Arctic, the establishment of an Asian carp initiative and the development of adaptive strategies to climate change.

We have also supported excellent freshwater research performed by our post-secondary institutions. The knowledge infrastructure program invested \$2 billion in more than 500 post-secondary infrastructure projects across the country, including projects related to freshwater research. This significant investment provides economic stimulus, creates jobs and helps generate the advanced technology infrastructure needed to keep Canada's institutions at the forefront of scientific advancement.

We are proud of the work of our scientists. Guided by our science and technology strategy, we will continue to support them in their undertaking of world-class research that builds on the knowledge of our oceans, waterways and fisheries resources.

• (2450)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Laurin Liu: Mr. Speaker, I am always surprised by this government's arrogance when it brags about supporting science. On the contrary, no government since Confederation has been so hard on scientists. The government is notorious for showing distrust of and disdain for science and fact-based policies. I can provide some examples.

This government sent layoff notices to 11% of its 17,000 scientists. This government also muzzled scientists, librarians and

even government archivists. This Conservative government cut funding allocated to fundamental research and prioritized private-sector research over public scientific research. This government also cut funding to research that could embarrass them politically, particularly in the area of climate change. It stacked boards of directors and it made changes to the priorities of granting councils. Finally, this government redirected funding to benefit star researchers at the expense of young researchers.

I could go on and on, but I do not have the time. I will conclude with a hope that in 2015, Canadians will vote for a government that believes in the freedom of science and that will govern on the basis of facts instead of ideological biases.

[*English*]

Ms. Kellie Leitch: Mr. Speaker, this government is extremely proud of its scientists and its record for supporting science and research in the country. Since the Prime Minister launched our country's science and technology strategy in 2007, we have made substantial investments to strengthen Canada's research advantages. As I mentioned before, since 2006, our government has provided more than \$9 billion in new resources to support science, technology and growth in innovative businesses.

Guided by our science and technology strategy, our government will continue to support federal scientists and researchers who undertake world-class research in these areas that benefit all Canadians.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Pursuant to an order made on Wednesday, May 22, 2013, the motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until later this day at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 12:53 a.m.)

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