



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

House of Commons Debates

VOLUME 147 • NUMBER 007 • 2nd SESSION • 41st PARLIAMENT

OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, October 24, 2013

—

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, October 24, 2013

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[*English*]

FINANCIAL TRANSACTIONS AND REPORTS ANALYSIS CENTRE

The Speaker: I have the honour to lay upon the table the audit report of the Privacy Commissioner concerning the Financial Transactions and Reports Analysis Centre of Canada.

* * *

OFFSHORE HEALTH AND SAFETY ACT

Hon. Lisa Raitt (for the Minister of Natural Resources) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-5, An Act to amend the Canada-Newfoundland Atlantic Accord Implementation Act, the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Resources Accord Implementation Act and other Acts and to provide for certain other measures.

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

* * *

ELIMINATION OF PARTISAN GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING ACT

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-544, An Act to amend the Auditor General Act (government advertising).

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to introduce my private member's bill, the elimination of partisan government advertising act. It would amend the Auditor General Act to appoint an advertising commissioner to oversee government spending on advertising. It is time to bring Canada's advertising rules into the 21st century. The appointment of an advertising commissioner would provide accountability for all Canadians.

I call on my colleagues from all sides of the House to support this bill and work with me to eliminate partisan government advertising.

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

[*Translation*]

Ms. Françoise Boivin: Mr. Speaker, I seek the unanimous consent of the House to move the following motion: That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, clauses 471 and 472 related to the appointment of Supreme Court justices be withdrawn from Bill C-4, A second act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 21, 2013 and other measures, and do compose Bill C-6; that Bill C-6 be deemed read a first time and be printed; that the order for second reading of the said bill provide for the referral to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights; that Bill C-4 retain the status on the Order Paper that it had prior to the adoption of this order; that Bill C-4 be reprinted as amended; and that the law clerk and parliamentary counsel be authorized to make any technical changes and corrections as may be necessary to give effect to this motion.

You understand, Mr. Speaker, that it is important that this motion be adopted unanimously. The government has found itself in a predicament over the appointment of Justice Nadon. What is more, yesterday we found out that the Government of Quebec is challenging the reference to the Supreme Court of Canada, the government's assumption that it can proceed in such a way and the two provisions included in the mammoth bill. I think that this is an important debate, one that cannot simply be relegated to a footnote at the end of a budget bill.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

* * *

[*English*]

PETITIONS

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table petitions signed by my constituents calling on the government to protect Canada's lakes and rivers, including the Humber River in my riding.

Government Orders

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to rise today to present two petitions. The first is from residents in my riding, Brentwood Bay, Saanich and throughout Saanich to the Gulf Islands. The petitioners are calling for full and stable funding and protection for our national broadcaster, the CBC.

I am also presenting a similar petition from residents throughout other areas of British Columbia as well as Saskatchewan.

[*Translation*]

VIA RAIL

Ms. Lise St-Denis (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to present a petition signed by nearly 2,000 people for the government's consideration regarding the cuts announced by VIA Rail. These cuts will have a negative impact on users of the train stations in Haut-Saint-Maurice, in terms of both passenger services to remote communities and services to our communities.

It is also important to consider the consequences in terms of job losses and reduced services offered in the train stations in Haut-Saint-Maurice.

[*English*]

VISITOR VISAS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow I am going to the funeral of a very good family friend of many years. This petition highlights what I believe is a concern all members of Parliament have. It calls upon the House of Commons to recognize the importance of families and to take the action needed to ensure that those who want to visit family in Canada be given extra consideration when applying for visitor visas. The petition makes reference to allowances for things such as funerals.

The funeral I am going to tomorrow is a good example. The brother of the deceased has been denied the opportunity to come to Canada. The petition deals with allowing family members to come to Canada to participate in funerals as well as weddings and other types of celebrations.

* * *

•(1010)

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

ECONOMIC ACTION PLAN 2013 ACT, NO. 2

BILL C-4—TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

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

That, in relation to Bill C-4, A second act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 21, 2013 and other measures, not more than four further sitting days shall be allotted to the consideration at second reading stage of this Bill; and

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

[*English*]

The Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 67(1), there will now be a 30-minute question period. We will try to keep questions to a minute and responses to a similar length. That way we can accommodate as many members as possible.

The hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, here we are again in a question period allocated once the government has invoked shutting down debate, closure. This is, I believe, the 50th time. The government likes these round numbers.

Here is the interesting moment when it is using the guillotine on debate on this particular bill. The government does not seem to comprehend the idea of what yes means.

The government comes to the opposition and asks how many days we would like to debate this bill. We say about this, and it says okay, and the very next thing it does is shut down debate. It is absolutely confusing and confounding to anybody who studies parliaments and how they are meant to work. There are some terms of negotiation and going back and forth on how many speakers are needed.

This is a 300-page bill with many hundreds of amendments. However, we agreed with the government. We said that about this many days would be fine, but it cannot take yes for an answer. It says that it is going to shut down debate anyway, and here it is, and this is when it is going to be.

Never mind when we get into the details of the bill, as my colleague from Gatineau attempted to do previously, to take out a section. This is supposed to be a bill on the budget. What is in there? It includes how we nominate Supreme Court justices. That makes perfect sense to the economy. That is a crucial economic factor, how a judge gets nominated from one bench or another to the Supreme Court.

This morning we suggested taking out that entirely separate question so that MPs from all sides could ask questions about it and then have a free and fair vote on it. “No, no, no”, says the government. “It has to be an omnibus motion”.

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The confusion for the opposition and for Canadians is the intransigence of the government, their taking what was the exception, which is to shut down debate in an undemocratic way, which Conservatives used to hate, by the way, when they were in opposition, and making it the norm for everything.

It does not matter the topic. It does not matter the willingness of the opposition to try to work with the government to get something done for Canadians. That does not matter. The complexity of the bill does not matter. The intention of the bill does not matter.

All the government has in its toolbox is a hammer, and then everything starts to look like a nail. Again and again, it shuts down the House of Commons. Again and again, it prorogues Parliament. Again and again, it has stuffed the Senate with its friends and buddies. All of these shortcuts are a pattern language, and the pattern language is a government that finds democracy inconvenient and that finds debate quarrelsome and a hassle for their agenda.

The fact of the matter is that we live in a free and fair democratic society, and that means that we have conversations. We have debate. Canadians want this place opened up, not shut down. Time and again, the Conservative government has not spoken to those values. It has spoken completely counter to those values for the convenience of this Prime Minister. Well, it is all catching up to him.

Specifically to the government, why the need to simply say no, when we said yes? Why the need to shut down debate we had already agreed to? Why the need to continue to invoke these closure motions, these guillotines on debate, when there simply is not a call for it? That is a simple question I am sure the government is able to understand and answer this morning.

•(1015)

Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, there were not a lot of questions in the member's minute or two. He used language like "guillotine" and other things that are really not anywhere close to what is happening.

The member would have the public believe that these are extraordinary measures. We had the budget in the spring. This budget implementation bill is the second part of it. It is very important that we move this through the House. We give ample time to debate it in the House. The member did not argue that we were not giving ample time. He argued that we were closing it down after an agreement with the NDP. I have seen agreements with New Democratic Party before.

We are doing this to move the bill to committee. We all need to understand the importance of the fragility of this economy. Certainly this budget debate is going to allow this to be passed. That is what Canadians are looking for.

Canada's economic action plan 2013 is the next step to helping create an environment in which jobs can be created, very simply. The member is asking why we are pushing this through. Far too many people across this country today still do not have work, although we have one of the lowest unemployment rates in the industrialized world. We watched it drop from 7.1% to 6.9%. Still, security and the confidence of the economy in passing this bill is an important step.

Canadians are waiting for things that are in this bill. They are waiting for the different measures that will be brought forward in the second part of the economic action plan. We are here today. We want to move as quickly as possible into debate and then get this to committee.

The Deputy Speaker: I did allow extra time for that first exchange, but I would again draw to the attention of the House the comments from the Speaker that each question should be for one minute and the response for one minute.

Resuming questions, the hon. member for Winnipeg North.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have a Prime Minister who has a different style: bringing in huge, massive budget implementation bills. This is unprecedented. No other prime minister in the history of Canada has attempted to bring in so much legislation through the back door of budget legislation. Not only does he have the tenacity to continue to bring this stuff forward, but today we again have closure on a budget bill that does a lot more than implement budget measures, all done through the back door.

On this particular time allocation, it is important to note that the briefing for Bill C-4 took place last night, while the government House leader introduced time allocation in the afternoon. He brought in time allocation prior to the briefing on the bill.

For the government House leader, why would he bring in time allocation even before the briefing on this massive, backdoor budget legislation that has been introduced to the House?

Mr. Kevin Sorenson: Mr. Speaker, the fact remains that time allocation is generally moved many times. Debate is cut short, very short, in minority governments. In this debate that could go on forever, we are allowing more time than Liberal governments allowed when they were in a majority government. We have had one day of debate already, and another four days of debate will give ample opportunity for members from all parties to stand and debate the issues in this bill. There are many very good points in the bill.

Yesterday, the Governor of the Bank of Canada said that growth is not as robust as initially expected; so there are many different measures brought forward in the bill that will help create jobs; many measures in the bill that are exactly what job creators are asking for. It is important to realize that we have created over a million net new jobs, but there are many more who still need to be working. Let us put these things into the budget, pass it and move on.

Government Orders

• (1020)

Mr. Ryan Leef (Yukon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my question is in terms of what Canadians want and what the minister has heard Canadians say around the budget implementation. The minister was in my riding in the Yukon territory recently, and he has referred to some of the budgetary measures that are important to Canadian groups and organizations that are waiting across Canada to deploy the services they provide that are valuable to Canadians. They are waiting for these investments to be rolled out so they can do the great work that we expect of them and that they want to do on behalf of all Canadians.

The five days of debate that has been allotted—in fact, record levels—is reasonable, and I take umbrage with the comment made by the Liberal member who said the legislation is being passed through the back door. In fact, our government has passed a record level of private members' bills, more than any other government in history. That is a great record.

Could the minister comment on some of the things he heard from our groups and organizations in the Yukon territory and in his riding about what they want to deploy for Canadians?

Mr. Kevin Sorenson: Mr. Speaker, this summer I was very pleased to travel to the member's riding and into the Yukon and Whitehorse to meet with the chamber of commerce and business folks from there. I was encouraged with the level of optimism there. They understood that the economic action plan was working not only for the Government of Canada; it was working for them, for Canadians and for families. The infrastructure programs were not just helping to put people to work, although that was a mandate and a priority for the government; they saw that infrastructure programs were leading to increased commerce and growth in the economy.

The level of optimism is not only in the Yukon; it is across the country. That is because Canadians realize that this government has a plan. Part of the opposition's concern is that we are trying to implement the plan. Yes, we want this plan to go forward because it affects Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, since Parliament returned, only four days ago, we keep hearing the same old story.

Yesterday I was at the presentation on this bill and we stayed until 11 p.m., and even later. The day before, there was a problem, because the presentation had not been translated and given in both languages.

It is important to realize that we do not have the time—and I will use these terms as a metaphor coloured by my professional training—to swallow or digest everything that is contained in this omnibus bill, which is becoming the Conservatives' typical way of doing things.

My question is to my colleague on the other side of the House. How does he think he can do his job? Is he working for all Canadians? We are the opposition, especially in the NDP, and we represent our constituents because they trusted us to stand up for them and put forward their suggestions and wishes.

However, given the usual practices of the Conservative government, we cannot do anything. This is undemocratic. I hope he will learn a few lessons from the first session of this Parliament.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Sorenson: Mr. Speaker, I welcome the member's question, which really was not a question. However, the New Democratic Party is the party of filibustering.

We have sat through a number of minority governments. I have had the privilege of chairing the foreign affairs, Afghanistan, public safety and national security committees. Except in the last Parliament—working together, things had been working better—the filibuster party across the way has made every step almost impossible in those minority governments.

This is not that type of thing. This is a measure to implement the budget, to implement the plan. It is a plan that, again, extends and expands the hiring credit for small business.

I was asked earlier what I heard in the Yukon. Well, I heard in the Yukon what I heard all across the country. Measures like the hiring credit are imperative for us to create other positions in our businesses. It is imperative for us to expand our businesses. This budget allows for that type of legislation to be implemented.

The passage of this budget, BIA 2, that we are discussing right now would allow it to move to committee where it could be discussed, debated and studied, and then return here and be passed. There are many more good measures in this budget that Canadians, their families and small and medium sized businesses are requesting out of this government. It is very important that we move on this quickly, that we finish the debate, that we pass this very important legislation and implement the good measures that are in it.

• (1025)

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am a little stunned to hear my hon. colleague from Alberta across the way, who ran on a platform to rid Parliament of the Liberals, a platform of open, transparent and participatory government, while every move the Conservatives have made has removed those promises from the way they govern.

I am a little stunned to hear the hon. parliamentary secretary say that debate in Parliament is a filibuster. We simply want the opportunity to debate a budget bill. That is our primary responsibility. It is to hold the government accountable on spending. That is why people elect us to come to the House of Commons.

We have to remember that only 38% of citizens elected the current government. The remainder elected us, the opposition, to hold the government accountable on spending. We are simply doing our due diligence.

I guess it has gone from bad to worse. I find it absolutely stunning that not only are the Conservatives now invoking closure so early in this very important debate, which frankly is a lot about law and policy and not just monetary measures, but in fact they did not even have a briefing because they did not have interpretation on the first day.

So here we are doing our best to have a cogent debate on a bill, and the Conservatives are not assisting members of Parliament whatsoever.

Mr. Kevin Sorenson: Mr. Speaker, this budget will help small and medium-size business. We have helped create over a million jobs. Granted they were created by small and medium-size business, but we have put measures in place to help build jobs.

The NDP, the no development party, across the way does not understand that. Its members seem to believe that jobs just come and go. When we sit and listen to them, it seems they are almost as satisfied if the jobs go. Therefore, we want to put in place measures that will help small and medium-size businesses create jobs. They are doing a pretty good job of it. Out of all the industrialized countries in the G7 and G8, the most optimism is with respect to this country. That is because we have put measures in place. We have come forward with the budget, half of it in the spring and the other in the fall, which includes measures such as the lifetime capital gains exemption. People are even contacting those MPs about the importance of this legislation.

Let us move this to debate. A filibuster is not debate. I never said that. I said that what happened in committee was filibuster. This is not anywhere on the same level. We want four or five days of debate on this budget. Anyone across the way who wants to speak will have ample opportunity.

• (1030)

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, apart from the habit of calling for time allocation, and this is about the 50th time since the Conservatives have had the majority government, there is another undemocratic process that occurs every time one of these budget implementation bills comes forward. The last two both exceeded 400 pages. This one has about 308 pages and involves much more than budget-related issues. It talks about labour relations with the public service. It talks about procedures for deciding whether a lawyer from Quebec is qualified to be on the Supreme Court. These are all issues that should be dealt with but should be treated as separate bills to allow democracy to flourish in the House of Commons. That way we can treat each of these very separate issues separately instead of bundling them all into one single vote wherein, if we disagree with one aspect of it, we still have very little choice in terms of being squeezed because, unless we vote for it, the government will say we are against the entire bill, which is patently ludicrous.

Why is the government continuing this process of having these mammoth omnibus bills?

Mr. Kevin Sorenson: Mr. Speaker, the member is talking about the scope of this bill.

It has been common practice in the House to include various measures in a budget and the subsequent budget implementation act. That is nothing new, nor was it new in past parliaments and past governments. It is not groundbreaking. It simply reflects the essential and important role of a budget to a government's agenda.

What constitutes a budgetary item is traditionally very broad. In 2005, the former Liberal government brought in Bill C-43, one of three budgets it brought in that year. Bill C-43, which was introduced in the 38th Parliament, amended dozens of different pieces of

Government Orders

legislation. Part of what the Liberals legislated in Bill C-43 was the Auditor General Act, the Asia-Pacific Foundation of Canada Act, the Broadcasting Act and the Canadian Environmental Protection Act. There were 15 or 20 different acts.

It is common. The Liberal government has done it. Other governments do it. In some of these cases, it is to shepherd or move certain pieces of legislation through in an expedited fashion.

Ms. Lois Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister said in his comments that our government has created many jobs in this country through our economic action plan. We know that job creation will create long-term prosperity in Canada for all Canadians.

In Newmarket—Aurora, I have chambers of commerce that are very active, and they are made up of a multitude of small and medium-sized businesses.

We put in place the hiring credit for small business. I wonder if the minister could speak to that and what that means for job generation across this country, in Newmarket—Aurora, and in his own riding.

Mr. Kevin Sorenson: Mr. Speaker, two and a half years ago Canadians elected this Conservative government. They elected it because they wanted the government to help put in place policies that would guide the Canadian economy through some very turbulent waters.

The government came forward with a number of plans, including Canada's economic action plan and infrastructure plans. We came forward with plan after plan. According to every international group, it succeeded. The level of optimism here in Canada is high.

Around the world, people recognize that Canada is one of the best places to do business, so what is this plan? Is it simply to spend money on infrastructure? No. The member brought forward the hiring credit and some other very good policy we have put in place. We saw unemployment rise far too high, so we came forward with a number of different measures, including the job grant and before that the hiring credit, that would give small and medium-sized businesses the opportunity to use a credit if they created another position on EI.

That is part of the plan. It is not "the" plan for the economy; it is a very small part of the plan. However, it allows small businesses to move forward, and if they need that extra little nudge, that extra little push into expanding their businesses in this tough time, they have to take some risk, but at least there is a measure that will be a little bit of an incentive to hire another person.

When that individual is hired, it is a job, it means food on the table at home, and it means that the economy expands and grows.

Government Orders

• (1035)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government has stifled debate over 50 times. The prorogation of Parliament was an all-out attack on democracy. What is more, at the last minute, the Conservatives added clause 471 to Division 19. According to this clause, “a person may be appointed a judge if, at any time, they were a barrister or advocate of at least 10 years standing at the bar of [the Province of Quebec]”.

The Conservatives have one person in mind and are including this clause in an omnibus bill so that they can appoint that person. My question is this: is this what the government calls standing up for all Canadians, all 35 million of them? The law clearly states that three positions are reserved for Quebecers. Quebec judges are competent enough that we can find some there to appoint.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Sorenson: Mr. Speaker, the member from Quebec brings out one very small part and asks why it is in the budget implementation act.

We believe this matter needs to be resolved quickly, and this is probably one of the best ways to move it through the House quickly. If we could pass this measure unanimously right now, I would certainly be in favour, but I do not think it is possible for that to happen in the House right now. That is why the budget implementation act was the earliest and quickest way to resolve the matter. The member asked about that one part, and that is the answer.

However, let me say that it is a very small line in a 308-page document. In the past budget implementation, we delivered on our commitment. That is why Canada is positioned the way it is. That is why it is recognized around the world that we have the best Minister of Finance in the world sitting right here, the member for Whitby—Oshawa. We have a Prime Minister who understands the economy and is keeping a steady hand on the wheel.

I am pleased to say that we have been making the right choices for Canadians, for families, for employees, for employers, and for communities. Much more of that legislation is found right here within the budget implementation act no. 2.

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it was not a question of whether the government was going to move another time allocation motion but when it would do so. The Conservatives likely would have moved these time allocation motions sooner had they not shut down Parliament for four weeks—four weeks when Parliament should have been in session, four weeks that we could have used to discuss various issues that many of my colleagues have listed one by one. Obviously, we are wondering why these issues are being addressed in the budget implementation bill.

For example, the bill takes away public servants' right to strike. The Conservatives put this measure in a massive, omnibus bill that is over 300 pages long. The Conservatives are finally eliminating the tax credit for labour-sponsored funds, a measure that they were so proud to announce and something that constitutes a direct attack on Quebec's economy. The hon. member just spoke about the

appointment of Justice Nadon, even though her own party was part of a committee that supported that appointment. They now realize that they made a mistake. A Supreme Court justice was appointed in an unlawful and unfair way and now the Conservatives are trying to remedy that by slipping three or four lines into a megabill. What is more, the Conservatives are following the Liberals' example by continuing to pillage the employment insurance fund. This time, they will be taking \$2 billion. That is also in the omnibus bill.

What do the Conservatives have to hide? Why are they hiding these measures in this bill and why do they not want to debate it? After debate, we could vote on these measures democratically.

• (1040)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Sorenson: Mr. Speaker, the member talked about a number of measures there, and he asked a lot of questions.

Although this bill has been talked about in the House in earlier debate, I am not certain if freezing the EI rates for three years, which is part of what this bill would do, was in the throne speech or not. That measure would give certainty and take away risk. Knowing what it is going to do would give certainty to employers across the country.

They like to call it payroll taxes. We have said that we are not going to raise those. There are those who have suggested raising this payroll tax and that payroll tax and raising taxes in general; we have said that the climate of the economy right now is not one in which we want to raise taxes.

When I travel around my constituency and across Canada, I do not meet any Canadians who say that they would love to send Ottawa more money. They do not believe in the tax, whether it is through income tax, corporate tax, or their \$21 billion carbon tax. Canadians are saying that we need to build the economy. It is not going to be built by clobbering them with another tax.

The member talked about some labour issues. There is the labour code and there are labour relations issues. Some of those are included as well. They are a big part of the economy and they are going to be in the budget. You will have the opportunity to debate those issues at that time.

The Deputy Speaker: I would request all members to direct their comments to the Chair and not to individual members.

We will have the hon. member for Malpeque with a very short question, please. We are almost out of time.

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the minister said that the budget is important to the government agenda. Yes, we agree with that. Of course it is important.

However, it is important for democracy and for Canadians to debate and analyze various issues separately and apart from others. I could take the last point the minister raised on EI. He claimed that they are going to freeze EI rates under this particular bill. Will there be enough time to analyze that issue on its own?

We know the reason rates have been frozen: it is because there ended up being a bigger return on EI than the Minister of Finance originally figured there would be. The reason for that is that the attacks the Conservatives made on seasonal industries in the last budget have driven people off employment insurance, so the program is not available to them as it should be. That issue needs a full debate, and the Conservative government, with its omnibus bill, is denying those kinds of debate.

Mr. Kevin Sorenson: Mr. Speaker, I think the former Liberal cabinet minister understands the situation.

He talks about not having enough time to debate. There is more time for debate on this budget bill than there has been in the last 20 years. It is longer than any debate on a Liberal budget under their majority governments. Those are the facts.

There are five days of debate on a budget in the fall. This minister makes it sound as though we are cutting this thing very short, but it is longer than they allowed the Parliament of Canada in their majority government.

The aim of today's motion is to provide certainty to the House and to the finance committee so that they can move forward with their plans. In terms of debate, it moves from being debated here to being studied and debated in the finance committee. Then it comes back and then it goes forward again. There will be ample debate on this bill.

I encourage the member to read it and to stand in the House and debate it when the debate is fully under way.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: It is now my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith the question necessary to dispose of the motion now before the House.

[*English*]

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

• (1125)

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

Government Orders

(Division No. 5)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambler
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Armstrong
Aspin	Baird
Bateman	Benoit
Bergen	Bezan
Block	Boughen
Braid	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
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Dykstra
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Flaherty	Fletcher
Galipeau	Gallant
Gill	Goguen
Goldring	Goodyear
Gosal	Gourde
Grewal	Harper
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hawn
Hayes	Hiebert
Hilley	Hoback
Holder	James
Jean	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kent	Kerr
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lake	Lauzon
Lebel	Leaf
Leitch	Lemieux
Lizon	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunney
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Mayes	McColeman
McLeod	Menegakis
Menzies	Merrifield
Miller	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Nicholson
Norlock	Obhrai
O'Connor	Oliver
O'Neill Gordon	Opitz
O'Toole	Paradis
Payne	Poillievre
Preston	Raiitt
Rajotte	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Rickford	Ritz
Saxton	Schellenberger
Shipley	Shory
Sopuck	Sorenson
Stanton	Strahl
Sweet	Tilson
Toet	Trost
Trottier	Truppe
Valcourt	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Wallace
Warawa	Warkentin
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	Wilks
Williamson	Wong
Woodworth	Yelich
Young (Oakville)	Zimmer — 144

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NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Ashton
Atamanenko	Aubin
Bélanger	Bellavance
Bennett	Benskin
Bevington	Blanchette
Blanchette-Lamothe	Boivin
Borg	Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet	Brahmi
Brison	Brosseau
Caron	Casey
Cash	Charlton
Chicoine	Chisholm
Choquette	Chow
Christopherson	Cleary
Comartin	Côté
Cotler	Crowder
Cullen	Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Day
Dewar	Dionne Labelle
Donnelly	Doré Lefebvre
Dubé	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Dusseau	Easter
Eyking	Footé
Freeman	Fry
Garneau	Garrison
Genest	Genest-Jourdain
Giguère	Goodale
Gravelle	Groguhé
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)
Hughes	Jacob
Jones	Julian
Karyiannis	Kellway
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Laverdière	LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leslie
Liu	MacAulay
Martin	Masse
Mathysen	May
McCallum	McGuinty
Michaud	Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Mulcair	Murray
Nantel	Nash
Nunez-Melo	Pacetti
Papillon	Patry
Pécllet	Pilon
Quach	Rafferty
Ravignat	Raynault
Regan	Rousseau
Saganash	Sandhu
Scarpaleggia	Scott
Sellah	Sgro
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	Sitsabaiesan
St-Denis	Stewart
Stoffer	Sullivan
Thibeault	Tremblay
Turmel	Valerioté — 116

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

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

SECOND READING

The House resumed from October 23 consideration of the motion that Bill C-4, A second act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 21, 2013 and other measures, and of the amendment, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: The hon. member for York Centre has the floor, and he has 17 minutes left to conclude his remarks.

Mr. Mark Adler (York Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I was saying yesterday, Canada's fiscal fundamentals are strong, and they are sustainable. However, to truly understand the strength behind this performance, one has to consider the hard work that took place long before through actions our government took to pay down debt, lower taxes, reduce red tape, and promote free trade and innovation. Most importantly, our government paid down significant amounts of debt when times were good and has kept our debt-to-GDP ratio well below that of our G7 counterparts. As a result, when the recession hit, we had the fiscal room necessary to respond, unlike other nations that were forced to pile vast amounts of unaffordable new debt onto old. We kept our promises to the Canadian people.

We took action to keep taxes low for Canadian families and businesses. For example, our government cut the GST from 7% to 6% to 5%. We created tax free savings accounts, which now benefit more than eight million Canadians. We established a \$5,000 tax credit for first time homebuyers. We reduced the lowest personal income tax rate and increased the basic personal exemption. We introduced income splitting for seniors and brought in arts and fitness tax credits for our children. We lowered the small business tax rate to 11%, and more.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The member is about 10 feet away from me, and I cannot hear him because of the noise in this House. If members want to carry on a conversation, leave the chamber. Take it outside.

Resuming debate.

Mr. Mark Adler: Mr. Speaker, overall, the federal tax burden is now at its lowest level in half a century. As a result of our government's low-tax plan, in 2013 the average Canadian family now pays \$3,200 less in taxes.

Our Conservative government recognizes the vital role small businesses play in the economy and in job creation. That is why we are committed to helping them grow and succeed.

We know that they have been growing. We see the results. Canada is leading the world in job creation with more than one million net new jobs created since the recession. With lower taxes, businesses can now invest in new equipment, hire more workers, and expand their operations.

Tax cuts benefit Canadians, all Canadians, including both Ontario and Quebec's manufacturing sectors. In fact, Suzanne Benoit, president of Aéro Montréal, had this to say:

By actively supporting this...sector with effective and well-designed programs, the Canadian government is helping ensure the industry's long term growth and the creation of high quality jobs for Canadians.

In Ontario, Carlos Paz-Soldan, president and CEO of the Toronto-based Tenet Computer Group, added:

This budget recognizes the strong link between the innovation needs of firms such as mine and the skills and talent of college and polytechnic students across the country.

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Richard Paton is president and CEO of the Chemistry Industry Association of Canada. CIAC said that it was:

...pleased by the federal budget's focus on manufacturing, jobs and growth. Funding to encourage innovation and improve the competitiveness of Ontario's manufacturing sector was especially welcomed....

As members can see, specific actions taken by our government have enabled businesses to grow. For example, during the recession, our Conservative government extended and expanded the job-creating hiring credit for small business, which benefits an estimated 560,000 employers; increased and indexed the lifetime capital gains exemption to make investing in small business more rewarded; expanded the accelerated capital cost allowance to further encourage investments in clean energy generation; and more.

During the recession, the opposition voted against these tax relief measures. Why does the opposition continually vote against supporting Canadian businesses? Why do they not support Canadian workers? If the opposition had its way, it would have the government engage in risky spending schemes or would force a \$21-billion carbon tax on Canadian consumers or would hike taxes on job creation, thereby stalling economic growth.

These ideas will not work. Indeed, time has proven over and over that the way to support economic growth is by lowering taxes. Simply put, we cannot tax our way to economic prosperity.

Economic action plan 2013 builds on our government's significant action to support small businesses since 2006, which includes reducing the small business tax rate from 12% to 11%, increasing the small business limit to half a million dollars, lowering the federal corporate income tax rate to 15% to help create jobs and economic growth for Canadian families and communities, and eliminating the corporate surtax for all corporations in 2008, which was particularly beneficial to small business corporations, as the surtax represented a larger proportion of the overall payable tax.

This also includes introducing a code of conduct for the credit and debit card industry. Indeed, our government just recently improved the code by expanding it to include mobile payments, a move welcomed by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, which said it:

...will help make the Code even more relevant and useful to small business owners, and we applaud the government...

Overall, a typical small business now has \$28,600 in savings because of our Conservative government's low-tax plan.

Having said that, our government is under no illusions that our work is finished. The global economy remains fragile, with growth in advanced economies slower than expected, and Canada is certainly not immune. That is why Canada's economic action plan actively pursues new trade investment opportunities, particularly with large, dynamic, and fast-growing economies.

Indeed, our government recently completed negotiations on a comprehensive economic and trade agreement with the European Union. This agreement alone has the potential to add more than 80,000 net new jobs in Canada. Do not take my word for it. Let us hear what others have to say.

John Manley, president and CEO of the Canadian Council of Chief Executives, agrees that:

...the [comprehensive and economic trade agreement] will create jobs, spur investment and promote economic growth.

● (1130)

Unlike the opposition, we understand that the pursuit of free trade is beneficial for Canada's economy. Our government's trade agenda has already made Canada one of the most open and globally engaged economies in the world.

Since 2006, we have reached free trade agreements with nine countries and are negotiating with many more. We have also concluded foreign investment promotion and protection agreements with 16 countries and are currently in active negotiations with many others. Canada has also joined the trans-Pacific partnership negotiations and we are actively pursuing new trade and investment opportunities in large, dynamic and fast-growing economies such as China, India and Japan, reflecting our belief that freer and more open trade is a key stimulus for economic global recovery.

Unlike the opposition, we know that by growing international trade and creating additional export opportunities for Canadian businesses, we will improve the standard of living for all Canadians. Free and open trade has long been a powerful engine for Canada's economy. Canadian businesses need to access key export markets in order to take advantage of new opportunities. Economic action plan 2013 builds on these measures through targeted actions that will help our manufacturers and businesses to continue to succeed on the world stage and secure a prosperous future for all Canadians.

Our government is continuing to build on our sound economic position with the implementation of economic action plan 2013. The second budget implementation act would deliver a three-year freeze on employment insurance premium increases. This tax relief would help support Canada's continuing economic recovery and sustained business-led long-term growth. However, again, do not take my word for it, let us hear what others have to say.

Diane Brisebois, president and CEO of the Retail Council of Canada agrees:

This freeze on premiums will mean more money for employers to invest in other important areas such as employment, training and infrastructure...

Furthermore, the employment insurance freeze would enhance Canada's globally competitive business environment. The freeze would help to attract foreign investment in Canada, create jobs for Canadians and foster long-term economic growth. In fact, Dan Kelly, president of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business agrees:

—payroll taxes like EI are particularly challenging for small business...[the] announcement of an EI rate freeze is fantastic news for Canada's entrepreneurs and their employees. This move will keep hundreds of millions of dollars in the pockets of employers and employees which can only be a positive for the Canadian economy.

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Most important, freezing EI rates would have a significant impact on low-income Canadians. Joyce Reynolds, the Canadian Restaurant and Foodservices Association executive vice-president of government affairs, notes:

Payroll costs have a significant impact on overall labour costs. They are a barrier to hiring, particularly for inexperienced workers...We are pleased the government is demonstrating commitment to youth employment by holding the line on these profit-insensitive costs.

Unlike the opposition, our government understands that tax relief is important to Canadian families. I encourage members opposite to vote in favour of this important measure, which would leave more money in the hands of Canadians.

Our government remains firmly committed to supporting Canadian jobs and fostering long-term prosperity for Canadians and their families. Canada's low-tax approach continues to be a beacon to other nations around the world in a time of global economic uncertainty. Our efforts have certainly not gone unrecognized. Indeed, KPMG's "Competitive Alternatives" 2012 report concluded that Canada's total business taxes were more than 40% lower than those in the United States and confirmed that Canada had the lowest tax burden on business in the G7. Along with promoting investment in our support for free and open trade, the government continues to support the low-tax environment that is required to create jobs and economic growth.

Canada is now one of the top five destinations in the world to start a business. Colleen McMorro of Ernst & Young remarked:

Canada has emerged as a real leader in fostering an entrepreneurial culture... Canada also offers a supportive tax and regulatory environment for entrepreneurs. All these factors are combining to really promote the growth of entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship from coast to coast.

She concluded by saying, "Canada's government has been highly supportive of entrepreneurs, providing regulatory and tax regimes that have enabled start-ups and growing companies to flourish".

• (1135)

Clearly, Canada's competitive tax system plays a crucial role in supporting economic growth. These tax reductions would leave more money for the private sector to reinvest in the machinery, equipment, information, technology and other physical capital that would further boost the recent productivity gains we have seen in businesses across Canada. Most important, lower taxes would allow businesses to hire more Canadians and offer higher wages as they extend production and take on the world.

I encourage all members to support Bill C-4.

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have some questions for my colleague from the riding to the north of me concerning this budget bill which includes not only budgetary items.

The government has included some workers health and safety things that would strip powers from health and safety officers. This was never mentioned in the budget, yet it is in the budget implementation bill. I think if the workers at the Bombardier plant in his riding were facing the same kind of action by the provincial government, they would be pounding on my colleague's door complaining about what the provincial government was doing to

them, yet the Conservatives are proposing something similar that was never in the budget. Why it is there?

Why are some of the consumer protection things that the government has touted as being necessary not there? They could have been included.

Why are the Conservatives insistent on making this a time allocation bill when the opposition was prepared to agree on the amount of time it was going to have?

The government prorogued and did not spend a lot of time in the House and yet it wants to hurry this up.

• (1140)

Mr. Mark Adler: Mr. Speaker, perhaps the hon. member for York South—Weston was not listening clearly to my speech.

Economic action plan 2013 has received widespread support from the business community, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the Canadian Council of Chief Executives as well as a variety of other business organizations that say everything we have done in this budget to create jobs is welcomed, and the proof is in the pudding.

We have created over one million net new jobs since the peak of the recession in 2009 and we continue to create jobs. We are the number one job creator in the G7. We receive praise from a variety of international organizations, from economists, from *Forbes* magazine. As I indicated in my speech, we are the best place to be doing business. A variety of organizations have said that from the OECD to the IMF.

What is really important is that our government is clearly focused on what matters most to Canadians, and that is jobs, growth and long-term prosperity. With that in mind, we are clearly focused on what matters the most. Like a laser beam, we are focused on the economy.

As such, I would encourage NDP and Liberal members to join us and help us create even more jobs in our great country so they can go back to their constituents at voting time and tell them they helped the Canadian government create jobs and that is what mattered most to them. They could tell their constituents they played a role in all of that.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important for us to note that when the Prime Minister was in opposition, he was exceptionally critical of the government of the day because there was a 100-page budget implementation bill. Now that he is in the Prime Minister's chair, he has increased the size of it almost tenfold. This bill contains 400 pages. Huge pieces of legislation that are completely and absolutely irrelevant to the passage of the budget are being proposed. That is one issue.

Government Orders

The other issue which is equally important is the fact that the government has brought in time allocation. All of these potential pieces of legislation that should have been stand-alone bills have all been incorporated into the budget bill. The Prime Minister, more than any other prime minister in the history of Canada, then says that his government is going to put a finite amount of time on debate. The government is putting in closure to force this legislation through second reading. That prevents MPs from being able to debate the budget bill and give it due diligence, let alone all of the other things that the Conservatives are trying to bring in through the back door.

How can the member believe, in good faith, that colleagues from all sides of the House can positively contribute to all the required debate to give due diligence to Bill C-4?

Mr. Mark Adler: Mr. Speaker, our government remains committed to what matters most to Canadians, which is jobs, growth and long-term prosperity. We have provided a number of supports for job creators in Canada, particularly the small business sector, by extending and expanding the hiring tax credit, as I indicated in my speech, which will help 560,000 employers.

We have just closed negotiations on the CETA, which will give access to Canadian business to half a million new customers in the European market. This is the largest single free trade agreement ever negotiated on the face of the earth.

The agreement is precedent-setting because we now have access to 2.7 million public sector procurement opportunities in Europe, which is completely unprecedented. I would encourage the member from Winnipeg to take the benefits of the CETA to his constituents and the businesses in his riding and encourage them to take advantage of the wonderful economic opportunities that lay ahead in the CETA.

I understand the Liberal Party candidate in the riding of Toronto Centre running for by-election on November 25, Chrystia Freeland, one of the economic advisers to his leader, said, "I say amen to raising taxes". That shows the difference between our party and the Liberal Party.

• (1145)

Ms. Lois Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have come through some very difficult times over the last four or five years. We have seen the world go through a global recession. What we know right now is that although many other countries are struggling with their debt load where it is really out of control, Canada is in the best fiscal position in the G7.

Canada's net debt to GDP ratio was 34.6% in 2012, the lowest among G7 countries. Germany is only second lowest at 57.2%. What we are looking at with this budget is creating more opportunity and more jobs in our economy. With more people who are working, there are going to be more people paying taxes, allowing us to get back to our objective of a balanced budget in 2015.

Since the member in his previous life worked with many companies in Toronto, could he speak more about what these kinds of actions that we are taking will mean to these job creators in our own economy?

Mr. Mark Adler: Mr. Speaker, indeed, the member is absolutely right. Our government took very strong action before the recession in lowering public debt by \$36 billion, which was significant. That gave us now the manoeuvrability and the cushioning to respond in a positive way during the past recession. We did so in a way that outstripped the economic performance of every other G7 country in the world.

We were able to strategically plan, and we are the only party with a plan. The Liberals and the NDP do not have a plan. The Liberal plan is non-existent and the NDP plan is just to raise taxes, including a \$21 billion carbon tax. Our party remains focused on what matters most to Canadians, which is jobs, growth and long-term prosperity.

The proof is clearly seen with one million net new jobs created in the peak of the recession and we have the strongest job creation record of any country around the world. We have received accolades from international organizations, from Canadian business associations and from business leaders. It is Canadian business that creates jobs, not the Canadian government. We can create the conditions that will foster Canadian job growth, and we have done that through our economic action plan. We have a plan; the opposition does not.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I attempted to get in on the debate earlier about time allocation on the bill. There were so many things said that were completely false, such as the notion that large budget omnibus bills are any part of the tradition of Parliament. They are offensive to parliamentary democracy.

The largest in all history was the one referred to earlier today by the parliamentary secretary before the current administration and that was in 2005. It was 120 pages long and it was offensive in its day. To have two budget omnibus bills in the year 2013, as we had in 2012, in all cases over 300 pages long is outrageous. To close debate on it so early is a further outrage.

Does my hon. friend not find it troubling that in the last session of Parliament, 38% of all government legislation came bound together in unrelated pieces of legislation for one vote and now these very large, unwieldy and unrelated pieces of legislation are forced into time allocation?

Mr. Mark Adler: Mr. Speaker, what I find offensive is that during the 1990s the Liberal government balanced the budget on the backs of Canada's most vulnerable citizens by cutting social services and cutting funding to education and health care. That is the way it balanced the budget.

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The way we balance the budget is by lowering taxes and creating the conditions whereby businesses can create jobs in this country, because everybody deserves a job. Is every Canadian employed right now? No, and that is why our job is not finished. We will never say our job is finished until every Canadian who wants to work has a job and has the opportunity to have a job. That is when we can say that our job is done.

I would encourage the opposition to, rather than criticize where there is no criticism warranted, join us in our plan to create jobs and foster economic opportunity and growth in this country of Canada.

• (1150)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House to discuss and debate Bill C-4, the second budget implementation bill.

This is yet another omnibus bill, which, at second reading, is again the subject of a time allocation motion. Our debate will therefore be limited, which will also be the case at the Standing Committee on Finance, of which I am a member. Indeed, we will have only two meetings to discuss a bill that is over 300 pages long and that amends a great many pieces of legislation, and not just budget-related legislation or legislation related to the nation's finances.

We strongly object to this way of proceeding, as we have from the beginning of the last session of Parliament, when the government decided to make a habit of this.

I would like to focus my remarks on one aspect in particular of Bill C-4, that is, the elimination of the tax credit for labour-sponsored venture capital funds, which was announced in budget 2013. This is an extremely crucial measure. On the one hand, the government claims that it will save \$355 million over five years. On the other hand, it wanted to please private investors and decided to invest \$400 million in private venture capital funds. However, the two kinds of funds are very closely related, and I will expand on that in my speech.

This measure constitutes an attack on a tool that is crucial to economic development in Quebec: labour-sponsored venture capital funds. These funds are considered a crucial tool for economic development, not only by those who benefit from them—mainly small and medium-sized businesses—but also by the Quebec business community, which objected immediately and still opposes this measure. These funds play a major role in Quebec. Eliminating this tax credit will hit Quebec particularly hard, which is why I am focusing my remarks on Quebec. In fact, 90% of the investment by labour-sponsored funds is currently in Quebec.

I will focus my remarks on the Fonds de solidarité FTQ in particular since it has been around for more than 30 years. Fondation CSN is another very active fund in Quebec, but the Fonds de solidarité FTQ has a 30-year history of economic investment. It has benefited corporations in Quebec as well as small and medium-sized businesses. That will be the focus of my remarks.

In the last 10 years alone, the Fonds de solidarité FTQ's investments have created or maintained over half a million jobs in Quebec.

I was saying that this is related to venture capital funds too. That is extremely important. The Fonds de solidarité FTQ is currently investing not only in Quebec companies and in starting up or rescuing companies in jeopardy that have the potential to contribute significantly to Quebec's economy, but it is also investing in private venture capital funds. Currently, the Fonds de solidarité FTQ is investing in 47 different funds. Some are international funds, but they are opening offices in Quebec.

Another dozen or so are Canadian funds, including the Ontario Venture Capital Fund, which was created by the Government of Ontario in the 2000s when the Ontario tax credit was eliminated. Venture capital invested in Ontario's economy had plummeted. Ontario tried to offset that by creating this agency, and the Fonds de solidarité FTQ invested heavily in it. Obviously there are also venture capital funds in Quebec that are invested in Quebec.

There are private venture capital funds, but there are also funds of funds. The largest fund of funds in Canada at present is Teralys Capital with access to \$700 million. Some \$250 million of that amount was invested by the Fonds de solidarité FTQ. In total, the Fonds de solidarité FTQ has invested over \$1 billion in all private venture capital funds combined in Canada.

• (1155)

Consequently, the measure announced in Bill C-4 by the Conservatives affects more than just the ability of labour-sponsored funds, such as the Fonds de solidarité FTQ and Fondation, to directly invest in small and medium-sized businesses in order to help them start up and grow.

It will have a serious impact on the ability of the Fonds de solidarité and Fondation to contribute to the success of private equity funds.

This is one of the major reasons why Canada's Venture Capital & Private Equity Association is opposed to this Conservative measure. I will say it again: it opposes this measure.

The government tried to appease them with a \$400 million investment, but the association understands the negative impact this measure will have on their activities, namely using venture capital to fund businesses in Canada.

I would like to quote the president of Canada's Venture Capital & Private Equity Association:

[*English*]

Namely, that eliminating the credit could put regional investment at risk, as [labour-sponsored venture capital corporations] are particularly active outside the main centres of economic activity. And, [the second concern is] that these vehicles "play a structural role" in the venture industry, and are frequently co-investors. "By eliminating the federal tax credit, a critical piece of infrastructure may be stripped from the entrepreneurial and venture capital eco-system,"....

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[Translation]

Canada's Venture Capital & Private Equity Association understands the havoc and destruction that will ensue as a result of this Conservative government measure, and it is not the only business association to oppose this measure.

The Fédération des chambres de commerce du Québec opposed the government's intention to abolish the tax credit as soon as it was announced in budget 2013.

I would like to share two quotes from Françoise Bertrand, president and CEO of the Fédération des chambres de commerce du Québec.

Before the government's announcement, she was already praising the positive impact of labour-sponsored funds, including the Fonds de solidarité FTQ.

This is what she had to say on March 1, 2013, before the government announced that it was going to abolish the credit:

[English]

They understand your business. On innovation, they're still there. The Fonds has been involved in digital technology. It's not easy; the banks are not there. The Fonds was really ahead of the game. One thing we should say is the extent of their interest and participation in businesses in the different regions of Quebec. They have been very active in making sure that they have not been missing any opportunity.

[Translation]

When the government announced in budget 2013 that it intended to abolish tax credits for labour-sponsored funds, there was an immediate reaction from the Fédération des chambres de commerce du Québec. Françoise Bertrand said:

These funds are important to the economic development of Quebec, and if the government cuts these tax credits, it will eliminate an important tool for promoting business start-ups.

Were those the only negative reactions? No. Michel Leblanc, the president and CEO of the Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal, denounced this measure the day after budget 2013 was tabled:

The contribution of labour-sponsored funds is invaluable for our economy. These funds make long-term investments in small and medium-sized businesses in sectors that tend to be less well served by private funds. What's remarkable is that their investments are countercyclical, because they maintain a high level of investment during economic slowdowns. Plus, the return on investment for the federal government is amply recouped, whether in terms of tax and quasi-tax revenue or recovery time.

What does that mean? Mr. Leblanc looked at two studies. One was conducted in June 2010 by SECOR Group, which was led by Marcel Côté, who is now a mayoral candidate in Montreal.

SECOR Group analyzed the return on investment of these tax credits for the Quebec and Canadian governments.

SECOR concluded that the tax credits were very positive for both governments. On average, the governments recouped the investment they made by way of this tax credit in less than three years. This means that in less than three years, these governments earn back the revenue they lost.

• (1200)

A second, quite recent study was conducted after the government announced the abolition of the tax credit. This study was carried out by IREC and was revealed by the Board of Trade of Metropolitan

Montreal. In Canada, for every dollar of tax credit going to savers who invest in labour-sponsored funds, the government receives in return the equivalent of \$1.26 in additional tax revenue. This is a gain.

For Quebec, this measure is even more important, because for every dollar that goes to savers in tax credits, the Quebec government receives \$2.05 in tax revenue. Any company with an opportunity to make a similar return would jump on it. With this measure, the Canadian government is killing the goose that lays the golden eggs. Clearly, the Conservative government does not really understand either the impact labour-sponsored funds have on the Québec economy or how they work.

The member for Beauce and Minister of State for Small Business and Tourism, and Agriculture tried to defend the decision announced in budget 2013 by saying that only 11% of the capital in the Fonds de solidarité FTQ is invested as venture capital.

That is not true. In fact, Quebec law requires both funds, the Fondation CSN and the Fonds de solidarité FTQ, to invest at least 60% of their assets in venture capital, which means in businesses. This is unsecured venture capital. It is risky, because it is low in the creditor pecking order should the investment go bad. That is why they also call it risk capital. Currently, the Fonds de solidarité FTQ invests 67% of its assets.

When he refers to the 11%, the Minister of State for Small Business and Tourism, and Agriculture and member for Beauce is all confusion. This relates to new investment made last year. Obviously, when you invest in a business and it prospers, the FTQ can give up its shares in the business and reinvest elsewhere. There is constant turnover.

The fund's total investment is 67% of its assets. There are businesses from which the Fonds de solidarité FTQ withdrew its funding in order to invest the 11% elsewhere.

We can therefore see to what extent the Fonds de solidarité FTQ plays a crucial role in Quebec's economic development. It has existed for 30 years, but in the last 10 years alone, over \$6.3 billion has been invested in Quebec businesses, private venture capital funds and funds of funds. Some 2,239 businesses in Quebec and Canada have benefited from this, and 80% of them have fewer than 100 employees. We can therefore see the impact on SMEs.

I suggest that my Conservative colleagues listen carefully, because they are always talking about their interest in promoting SMEs and helping them develop. The Fonds de solidarité FTQ plays a crucial role in the development of SMEs. Today in Quebec, it is estimated that 171,000 jobs have been created or maintained through the efforts of the Fonds de solidarité FTQ.

The tax credit does not go to the Fonds de solidarité FTQ; it goes to the savers who decide to invest in it. It is estimated that the immediate result of this Conservative measure will be the loss of about 20,000 jobs in Quebec alone. The measure will not create jobs; it will destroy jobs that Quebec and, by extension, Canada desperately need at this time. Labour-sponsored funds of this kind, and in particular the Fonds de solidarité FTQ, have also created funds that operate regionally. That is another crucial point.

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•(1205)

This has extremely useful spinoffs regionally. In the Quebec City area, 70,000 savers are currently contributing to the fund and receiving the tax credit, which is an incentive to save for them and an economic development lever for the fund.

The fund has invested about \$1 billion to date in the Quebec City area. In the last three years alone, this has benefited 400 businesses, and 45,000 jobs have been created or maintained in the area. In my own case, for example, 25 businesses in the Lower St. Lawrence region are receiving support from the Fonds de solidarité FTQ.

Why are these businesses especially concerned? Because the fund invests largely in the regions, where private venture capital and the banks do not dare to go.

Let us think about where we would be now if we had not had help from this fund, given the number of small and medium-sized businesses that need a hand with their economic development, particularly in the regions.

This is where the Conservative government fails to understand the real consequences of its actions. It is my impression that either in the Prime Minister's Office or in that of the Minister of Finance, they told themselves that this was a labour-sponsored venture capital fund with connections to the union and they could score a big hit by abolishing the tax credit and returning it to the private sector, which will do things better. On the other hand, people in the private venture capital field understand the importance of such funds. They protested against the move. Is the Conservative government listening? No. It is proceeding with the measure.

I would like to talk about these funds from another angle that is extremely interesting: the saver's angle. Savers currently benefit from a 15% tax credit on their investments in the Fonds de solidarité FTQ or the Fondation CSN. This is a necessary and crucial incentive. The government tells itself that they will be able to reinvest elsewhere if they want to and that the Fonds de solidarité FTQ is now big enough, with its \$9.6 billion in assets.

However, these funds have a specific role to play that private venture capital funds do not. Their particular mission is to invest in higher-risk areas. Their return is therefore much more uncertain. Sometimes—although this was not the case during the last economic recession—they may have a lower return because less than 30% of their assets is invested in the speculative market. Nearly 70% is invested in venture capital.

This is therefore a real deterrent to savings. Now, if savers seek higher returns, they will be much more inclined to turn to private funds such as mutual funds, venture capital funds or something else that will assure them of less uncertain, more stable and higher returns. This is why the tax credit is there in a complementary role.

I do not understand this decision by the Conservative government, which is determined to eliminate the tax credit. The Fonds de solidarité FTQ and the Fondation CSN are two key drivers in the development of the Quebec economy. They have proven their value and they are needed. The Fédération des chambres de commerce du Québec and the Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal recognize

the need for these development tools. The Conservative government is jeopardizing all this by eliminating the tax credit.

I would like to know why no one is taking the trouble to study this particular measure, which will have such a significant impact on the Quebec economy. The Conservatives are fond of saying that they work to ensure that they walk the talk. They should therefore conduct an impact study to assess the real effect of this measure, because it will have serious consequences.

I therefore expect to be able to discuss this measure in the Standing Committee on Finance. I hope to have informed questions from my colleagues. They should understand that this goes against the government's plan—and it is a plan, we certainly hear it often enough—for Canada's economic development.

•(1210)

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques for his excellent speech and the expertise he provided on the topic studied by the Standing Committee on Finance. I am sure that in committee he will be able to go head-to-head with the Conservatives and try to improve the bill, even though it is 300 pages long. The bill was introduced this week and a time allocation motion has already been moved. They want to talk about the bill as little as possible in the House.

Does the hon. member feel that the time available to study the bill is sufficient? Will we be able to properly fulfill the parliamentary duties granted us by voters in ridings across the country?

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Sherbrooke for his question. This is going to come up quite often. This bill is massive; it is another omnibus bill that contains many measures. Some measures address fiscal matters, which we are not opposed to. There are many other measures that have nothing to do with our country's fiscal reality.

Why would changes to the way Supreme Court justices are appointed be included in a bill such as this one? It has nothing to do with the budget, yet it has been included in the bill. There are also significant changes to the Canada Occupational Health and Safety Regulations, which are part of the Canada Labour Code. Those should be discussed separately.

A *Globe and Mail* editorial condemned this way of doing things, which the federal government has used routinely. Moreover, the members of the Standing Committee on Finance will not have the time to analyze this 300-page bill. The committee will meet twice at the end of November to study and analyze Bill C-4. We will not have enough time to analyze it. Such abuses, which we have also seen with other budget implementation bills, have led to catastrophic mistakes that the government has had to subsequently correct. These mistakes could have been prevented had the bills been studied carefully.

Government Orders

[English]

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government does not really understand how labour-sponsored venture funds actually work or it would not be doing what it is doing. These funds are job creators, yet the government, which claims to be a job-creating government, is doing things that will actually kill jobs in Quebec. Perhaps it is because the government has such disdain for labour, or such disdain for Quebec, that it has done this in the budget. In addition, the government has taken other pokes at labour by removing health and safety protections from the labour code, putting all of that on the back of the minister herself.

We see, yet again, a Conservative omnibus bill that goes well beyond what a budget would ever include. It includes things that should never be in a budget.

I wonder if the member would like to comment.

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is quite right.

I would like to say that I am extremely surprised and disappointed that the government members present in the House are not rising to discuss this matter. This is an economic debate. We are providing economic arguments against this job-killing initiative. The government has not said a word. I am extremely disappointed to not be debating this issue with the members present in the House.

With respect to my colleague's comments about the repercussions, I have this to say. I mentioned, among other things, what this will do to the Canada Occupational Health and Safety Regulations. The definition of workplace risk is being changed, and the minister will be given the discretion to address health and safety issues of employees working for businesses that fall under the Canada Labour Code. The way in which public sector collective agreements will be negotiated will change. The measures are far-reaching, and it is clear that the government does not intend to debate them in a free and engaged manner. This will have major repercussions, not only for Canada's economy and finances, but also for labour relations as we know them today. The government wants to quickly redefine them with an omnibus bill.

• (1215)

Mr. Jonathan Tremblay (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's speech was very eloquent. He clearly demonstrated that we already have all the figures to show that these forms of investment are good for our economy and our SMEs. They also generate income for the government and diversify our economy.

It is impossible to understand the reasoning behind this decision, considering all those figures, which are clear and publicly available. Yesterday the Fonds de solidarité FTQ and Fondation CSN met with the government to propose a way to increase investments, both in Quebec and elsewhere. However, the government again refused to reconsider its decision.

What could possibly have made this Conservative government, which has all the figures at its disposal, decide to eliminate this tax credit?

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, all I see in this decision is an ideological desire that is in no way rational, but that is still consistent

with this government's decisions. Its decisions are not rational, as I have mentioned before. If a government has an opportunity to do something that would bring in even more money in the future, and if it has the opportunity to invest and then recover its investment, it should jump on that opportunity.

Instead, the government is bringing in a measure that will undermine businesses. When a business has over \$9 billion in assets, it can be considered a large venture capital company. We are talking about tens—if not hundreds—of thousands of new jobs.

Funds and venture capital companies understand this reality. That is why they offered some alternatives to the government. They are wondering what the problem is, since the government makes money off the money it invests. Is the problem the fact that funds and venture capital companies do not invest enough in Canada? They are prepared to increase their investment limit outside Quebec.

The government will not accept other alternatives suggested by the two funds to ensure that the benefits are more wide-ranging.

All I see here is an ideological and completely irrational measure.

[English]

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for his thorough and cogent speech on this matter. It is regrettable that we do not have more opportunities like this, given the closure.

The current government says that its top priority is creating jobs and the economy. Conservatives have alluded from time to time to how they think this is a prime opportunity for indigenous Canadians to become involved in the economy, yet in this budget we do not see one single measure to enable that to happen. Time after time, the first nation, Metis and Inuit communities tell us that they need their land claims settled, they need the government to deliver on its commitments on the land claims and they need the government to provide fair and equal funding for education so they can have the skills and knowledge to apply for the jobs that would give them a fair income.

I wonder if the member could speak on how this budget seems to serve the needs and desires of only some, but not all, Canadians.

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, this is a government that governs through talking points. It governs with talk but little action. It actually likes to contradict or try to pretend the opposite of what it is actually doing.

[Translation]

The government has shared its intentions a number of times. It has talked about initiatives it has implemented or wants to implement. However, at the end of the day, we hear nothing. Most of what the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development says does not make much sense.

Government Orders

I can say that the Assembly of First Nations and aboriginal groups from across the country see what is going on and they are not impressed. The Idle No More movement did not come out of the blue. It developed in response to the government's ignorance of and inaction on aboriginal issues. This would have been an ideal opportunity to address some major issues.

However, instead of including elements in the budget that deal with education on reserves or that address the various problems affecting aboriginal communities in the country, the government decided to include elements that have absolutely nothing to do with the budget, such as the process for appointing Supreme Court justices.

• (1220)

[English]

Hon. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will say at the outset that I am sharing my time with the hon. member for Kitchener—Conestoga.

It is an honour to rise and address the House on budget 2013. I came to Ottawa from Edmonton Centre as part of this Conservative government. Since that time we have been both sound economic managers and prudent investors in all areas of government. We have lowered taxes to the lowest level in more than 50 years. The GST was cut from 7% to 6% to 5%. This has placed more money in the pockets of ordinary Canadians, where it belongs.

We have paid down \$37 billion worth of debt between 2006 and 2008. During this time, we also invested in our armed forces, which were in desperate need of equipment and rebuilding after decades of darkness under previous governments.

It was not long, however, before trouble appeared on the horizon. In August 2007, the credit bubble burst. The United States officially went into a recession in January 2008. This was the worst recession to hit the world since the 1930s. Those were troubling times five years ago. However, in the face of trouble our government responded decisively.

On January 27, 2009, the Minister of Finance introduced the first phase of Canada's economic action plan. This budget was a \$60 billion shot in the arm to the Canadian economy, including a \$12 billion infrastructure investment and \$20 billion worth of tax relief. As the Minister of Finance indicated at the time, these measures were targeted, timely and temporary. With an extra six-month extension, the stimulus funding wound down on October 31, 2011, as promised.

I am a Conservative, and I believe in balancing our budgets, lowering taxes, and individual initiative and enterprise. Canadians understand the importance of prudent fiscal management in their household budgets, and they expect the same from the government. I could not agree more. That is why I am pleased that our government has made fiscal prudence a priority.

I would like to speak to three of our government's fiscal priorities today, which budget 2013 keeps us on track to achieve. These priorities are the elimination of the deficit, introduction of balanced budget legislation as promised in the throne speech and paying down the federal debt while fostering a sound economic environment.

When Canada's economic action plan was initially introduced in 2009, we made it clear that deficits were not here to stay and neither was the stimulus. We acted, and deficits have been falling ever since. From a peak of \$56 billion in 2009-10, it was reported on October 22 that the federal deficit had fallen to \$18.9 billion for the 2012-13 fiscal year, coming in nearly \$7 billion below forecast. We made it abundantly clear that the deficit elimination would not be done on the backs of provinces or seniors.

Budget 2013 builds on previous actions, with an additional \$500 million in savings in 2013-14, rising to \$2.3 billion in 2017-18, for a total of \$8.4 billion over the next five years. When this is combined with actions taken since budget 2010, it means our government has announced savings that will reduce the deficit by more than \$15 billion in 2014-15 and beyond. This will amount to cumulative savings of more than \$84 billion over the 2010-11 to 2017-18 period. More than 75% of these savings will result from measures to restrain the growth in direct program spending.

Some of these measures to control program spending were developed during the strategic and operating review, of which I was privileged to be a member. This review found savings of \$5.2 billion in government operations, savings that will certainly contribute to not only eliminating the deficit but making government leaner and more efficient.

Direct program spending is projected to remain roughly at or below its 2010-11 level over the forecast horizon, 2017-18. However, federal transfers to individuals to provide important income support, such as old age security and employment insurance, and major transfers to other levels of government for social programs and health care will continue to grow over the forecast period.

With the recent Speech from the Throne, our Government again signalled our continuing belief in the importance of sound fiscal management by promising to introduce balanced budget legislation.

Government holds the keys to the federal treasury and with that comes the expectation that those resources will be spent and managed wisely. As we are all aware, these past five years have been anything but ordinary economic times. With sovereign debt crises in the eurozone, the fiscal cliff, sequester and government shutdown in the United States, it is clear that turbulent economic waters remain for the foreseeable future. However, a balanced budget is essential for the long-term financial health of the government and Canada and generates confidence in the Canadian economy.

We have promised to balance the budget by 2015. That promise we will keep, and we will go further. Our Government will enshrine into law its successful and prudent approach.

• (1225)

Our balanced budget legislation will require balanced budgets during normal economic times and concrete timelines for returning to balance in the event of an economic crisis.

Government Orders

I am pleased with this additional commitment to financial responsibility. However, to that end we must balance the budget, and budget 2013 keeps us on track to do so. We have promised to do so without raising tax. To do so we must reduce government spending.

Budget 2013 builds on these efforts to reduce government spending by announcing an additional \$1.7 billion in ongoing savings, including examining departmental spending to ensure that government operations are managed as efficiently as possible; reducing travel costs through the use of technology by using remote meeting solutions, such as telepresence and video conferencing; modernizing the production and distribution of government publications by shifting to electronic publishing and making print publications the exception; standardizing government information technology to reduce costs; and by closing tax loopholes and keeping taxes low and competitive in order to give businesses the incentive to create jobs.

Lastly, as part of our commitment to return to balanced budgets by 2015, we must ensure that our economy continues to grow and create jobs. To this end, the Prime Minister announced at the G20 summit in St. Petersburg in September that the Government of Canada is committed to achieving a federal debt to GDP ratio of 25% by 2021. The government will consider advancing the planned targets if economic growth is significantly stronger than anticipated.

Canada currently has the lowest total government debt of any nation in the G7, a number that includes the entire provincial, territorial and local governments, as well as the Canada pension plan and Quebec pension plan. In fact, Canada's net debt was less than half the G7 average in 2012, coming in at 34.6% of GDP.

Low debt levels will result in lower taxes for Canadians as less money is required to service the debt. Low debt levels also mean a strong investment climate that supports job creation and economic growth. Job creation and economic growth have been our government's focus since we began to tackle the recession, and that will not change.

That is also why budget 2013 introduced the Canada job grant to provide for retraining of individuals who are looking to retrain and fill some of the numerous vacancies in our economy. The government remains singularly focused on creating an economic climate where businesses of all sizes are able to create jobs and invest in their operations and where we address the issue of people without jobs and jobs without people. Everyone wins.

Budget 2013 also aims to balance the budget by penalizing those who seek to avoid paying taxes. Through budget 2013, we are introducing new administrative monetary penalties and criminal offences to deter the use, possession, sale and development of electronic suppression of sales software designed to falsify records for the purpose of tax evasion.

We are also closing tax loopholes relating to character conversion transactions, synthetic dispositions, leveraged life insurance arrangements and other schemes, to ensure that everyone pays their fair share. If people want the benefit of being a Canadian, that involves paying their share.

To better promote economic growth, we have also extended the hiring credit for small business. It gives small business relief from the employer's share of employment insurance premiums paid in a year. It does this by crediting up to \$1,000 on the payroll account based on the increase in an employer's EI premiums paid in one year over those paid in the year before. The simple aim of this measure is to encourage job creation in small businesses, which form the backbone of our economy.

Finally, once the budget is balanced, we will begin paying down debt again. As promised in the Speech from the Throne, we will bring the federal debt to GDP ratio back down to pre-recession levels by 2017. Deficit elimination, balanced budget legislation and paying down the debt are essential cornerstones of a strong and healthy economy.

In closing, please allow me to quote the C.D. Howe Institute and its reaction to budget 2013:

...the 2013 budget should be well received by markets. Budgetary balance is projected based on reasonable assumptions and within the previously announced time frame.

That quote speaks for itself. Budget 2013 has been well received by the markets, and Canada is one of the few nations retaining their AAA credit rating. It was one of the last nations into the recession, it came out of the recession quickly and in the past four years the economy has created over one million net new jobs.

This is great progress, but on this side of the House we are not content with that. We are eager for more. It is clear that the Canadian way of prudent fiscal management comprised of debt repayment, responsible stimulus, timely deficit elimination, balanced budgets in the medium term and returning debt to pre-recession levels is the way to address extraordinary economic times.

It lays the foundation for security and prosperity for years to come, in fact generations to come. I am encouraged to know that the nation my grandson, Tyler, is growing up in is safer, stronger, more prosperous and filled with opportunity.

● (1230)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I respect my colleague and I am pleased to ask him a question. His speeches are often well balanced and I am sure his answer will be no exception.

Bill C-4 contains various measures. Why did the government choose to include provisions on the Supreme Court, for instance, in the budget implementation bill? Can he explain the link between these provisions and his government's budgetary measures that he boasted about throughout his speech? He boasted about his government's job creation record. We have heard all about that.

Can he make the connection between that and the various provisions that have nothing to do with a budget? Can he explain what prompted his government to make these choices?

*Government Orders**[English]*

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Mr. Speaker, in fact, Canada is an extremely diverse country and there are many things that go into making Canada a strong country.

In terms of the economy, part of that is a very sound legal system, a very sound justice system. Obviously, the pinnacle of that is the Supreme Court of Canada. Therefore, it is very important that we have, at all levels of the justice system, measures and the right kind of people in place to support the Canadian economy and the challenges that come before the Canadian economy, which may in fact also come before the courts.

While it may seem a bit too diverse for my friend, and I understand that, that is one of the reasons behind some of the measures that we have proposed.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to my colleague's comments about the budget and I was especially intrigued by his comment about budget 2013's provision for the Canada job grant.

One thing I did shortly after budget 2013 was to hold a round table in my community. A round table was held at Conestoga College where industry leaders were brought together who were looking for skilled trades people. Without exception, every person around that table applauded the Canada job grant.

It is unfortunate that many of the provinces are dragging their heels on this at a time when what we are doing now is not working. I cannot understand why they would not look at a model that would create jobs. Employers are eagerly trying to help us with that task. I wonder if my colleague could comment on the kind of support that he has seen in his riding.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his very relevant question.

In Edmonton Centre, Kitchener and probably pretty much every place across the country, employers, especially small businesses, are looking desperately for people with trades skills. There are a lot of university-trained folks, and as good as a B.A. and B.Sc. might be, it does not really equip them to do some of the jobs we need doing. We have a country to build and we need skilled tradespeople. Small business is looking for them everywhere.

One thing the federal government has to do is provide leadership, and that is exactly what we have done in bringing forward the Canada job grant. I think the provinces will get on board one by one when they realize that. I know Alberta is being pressured and I am sure other provinces are being pressured by small businesses, saying, "Let's get on board here". The federal government is providing leadership. They need to get on board because this is the right thing to do for the Canadian economy, it is the right thing to do for small business, and it is the right thing to do for Canadian workers.

[Translation]

Mr. Jonathan Tremblay (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday evening a presentation was made on this bill, but in English only. The presentation was made again last night in English and French, after the debate started.

The people making the presentation admitted that they did not consult everyone affected by the measures in this bill.

What does the hon. member think about that?

[English]

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Mr. Speaker, I was not privy to that particular conversation, so I cannot make a direct comment on that. The government consults very widely. Invariably, in doing those kinds of consultations, there is always going to be someone who says, "You didn't ask me". That is a valid comment. The government tries very hard to consult as widely as possible. Part of that is people coming forward to say, "You need to hear from me, too". It is not just a one-way street; it is a two-way street.

The government makes every effort to consult as widely as possible. Invariably, in an enterprise as big as the Government of Canada, as big as some of the things we are doing, someone is going to feel left out from time to time.

• (1235)

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak in favour of Bill C-4, a second act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 21, 2013 and other measures.

The bill cannot be considered in isolation. Bill C-4 implements parts of this year's budget, and this year's budget is just another phase in Canada's economic action plan, an approach to governance that has allowed Canada's economy to lead the world through unstable times. Since the global financial crisis that triggered this uncertainty, each year I hear members opposite claim that the government's policies would end up hurting Canadians. Each year statistics prove their worries are totally unfounded. While members opposite continue to attack our Minister of Finance, impartial experts continue to honour him as the world's best.

While I expect the hyperbole to continue in discussing Bill C-4, I would remind Canadians to consider the following when they hear the opposition parties attacking our record. Our debt to GDP ratio is by far the lowest in the G7. Since the depth of the global recession, Canada has created almost a million net new jobs, the strongest record in the G7. These facts are praiseworthy on their own, but please also remember that we are on track to return to surplus. When the budget returns to surplus, we will not only enjoy the strongest record of job creation and fiscal discipline in the industrialized world, but we will also enjoy the benefits of investments made during the stimulus phase.

Government Orders

In Waterloo region, we have seen much needed expansion to our local post-secondary institutions to develop the talent and innovation that we need to remain prosperous. Conestoga College is better positioned than ever before to help business innovate their processes, and now operates a school of food processing technologies. Food and food processing is Ontario's second largest industry, but this school is the first of its kind in Ontario. We have seen community centres built or refurbished, and critical infrastructure such as waste water and roads renewed. We have witnessed the explosive growth of high technology startups, coalescing around the federally supported Communitech hub.

We have seen the impact of programs designed for southwestern Ontario delivered by way of the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, or FedDev, helping businesses such as Miovision Technologies capture new markets, and non-profits such as the Southern Ontario Locomotive Restoration Society build a station for the Waterloo Central Railway, a tourist link between the city of Waterloo and St. Jacobs in the township of Woolwich. The agricultural adaptation program has supported businesses such as Martin's Family Fruit Farm, bringing apple chips to market, a healthy snack food that opens new markets for Canadian orchards. I could devote an entire speech to the investments our government has made in the Region of Waterloo Airport in Breslau that resulted in a safer facility, capable of handling a more diverse set of aircraft, which is critical for our area's continued growth.

All of this was accomplished during the most severe downturn since the Great Depression, while remaining on track for our return to surplus and without raising taxes on Canadians; all of this without raising punitive taxes on Canadians, as both opposition parties are calling for; all of this without gutting transfers to the provinces, as the previous Liberal government did. How is it possible, Canadians may wonder, for a government to maintain the world's best financial position, while also maintaining low taxes, maintaining transfers to provinces and individuals, and renewing Canada's infrastructure on top of all of that.

In my opening comments I noted that Bill C-4 implements budget 2013, which is the latest phase of Canada's economic action plan. However, even Canada's economic action plan is itself an implementation of our Conservative government's long-term financial plan for Canada, released in 2006, called Advantage Canada. Advantage Canada outlined the five priority themes our government would focus on through good times and bad. Our belief was that if Canada could focus on lowering taxes, keeping our books in order, unleashing our entrepreneurial culture, building world-class talent and maintaining world-class infrastructure, Canada could reach new levels of prosperity to pass on to our children and to our children's children.

Budget 2013 continued our focus on these priorities, and Bill C-4 implements measures that will enhance Canada's advantage in these key areas. Bill C-4, among other things, expands the eligibility for the accelerated capital cost allowance to include a broader range of equipment used in clean energy generation and biogas production. Budget 2013 renewed the accelerated capital cost allowance, and Bill C-4 expands on that application.

● (1240)

The accelerated capital cost allowance has been praised by businesses of all sizes in my riding. From Riverside Brass in New Hamburg to Chemtura in Elmira, businesses are investing in new equipment to keep themselves on top of a competitive global economy, thanks to our initiative. Depreciation is used by businesses to write off the value of their equipment according to government-set schedules. By accelerating the depreciation schedule to a more realistic rate, we are allowing the tax system to recognize the speed of business rather than slowing business to the speed of government. By making more of the equipment that is used in clean energy and biogas production eligible for the accelerated capital cost allowance, we are removing obstacles to growth.

Bill C-4 would also implement budget 2013's commitment to extend the hiring credit. This measure incents small businesses, Canada's largest source of job creation, to expand and grow by providing up to \$1,000 to offset the increase in EI premiums as an employer takes on employment with new growth. Over a half a million small businesses would take advantages of this opportunity, creating jobs for Canadians.

However, the legislation would do more than help small businesses grow and create jobs. Bill C-4 would make it more attractive for Canadians to pursue entrepreneurship and to pass their businesses on to the next generation. Small-business owners were happy to hear that Bill C-4 would increase their lifetime capital gains exemption by \$50,000 to a total of \$800,000, but they were ecstatic to learn that going forward this would be indexed. Many of them remember when the lifetime capital gains exemption went unadjusted for almost two decades, until this government assumed office. That is one more example of 13 years of inaction. It was wrong. It was unfair to small-business owners, who often put over 60 hours each week into their business, to blame inflation for making their retirement less and less viable. Never again.

If I could be permitted to diverge for a quick moment, many of my colleagues have asked what the mood is like in Waterloo Region, given the uncertainty around BlackBerry's future intentions. Despite recent challenges at BlackBerry, our mood remains positive and confident. Our community is headquarters to close to 1,000 technology companies that generate \$30 billion in annual revenue. The collaborative sensibilities, scientific excellence and entrepreneurial culture that fostered BlackBerry's growth remain strong. Our government's initiatives will certainly provide encouragement. Our investments supporting the creation of the successful Communitech hub, investing in talent at local universities and at Conestoga College, reducing red tape and incenting venture capital into the system have all been well received and are already making tangible results.

Government Orders

However, in government there is always a cost. On this side of the House, we feel these costs are justified as investments that will pay dividends for years to come, but that does not mean our ability to spend is limitless. Especially in these uncertain times, with so many priorities competing for federal dollars, it is more important than ever that all levels of government collect every dollar they are legitimately owed. Individuals and businesses who evade their taxes are not just pulling a fast one, they are denying money to our hospitals, first nations, student aid programs and other critical needs. Every tax dollar owed that remains uncollected is an extra dollar that someone else's tax bill assumes. Tax evasion has become much more sophisticated and our enforcement measures must keep pace.

As a member of Parliament who has encouraged action against the underground economy, I was pleased to see that Bill C-4 would introduce sanctions including monetary and criminal penalties to deter the use of software designed to falsify sales records for the purpose of tax evasion. This is not a revolution in approach; it is a natural evolution of our laws in response to the evolution of technologies, which is continually accelerating. It is much like the action called for in my Motion No. 388 targeting Internet predators, which received the unanimous support of the House several Parliaments ago. These types of improvements can be supported by all parliamentarians regardless of partisan stripe.

Bill C-4 would be the final step in implementing budget 2013. I ask all members of the House, especially those who claim to make decisions based on evidence, to accept the opinion of impartial experts from around the world that the Conservative government's approach has brought Canada to lead the world, to accept this latest phase of Canada's economic action plan, which would be just as beneficial to Canadians, and to get on board.

• (1245)

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech on Bill C-4.

Earlier, when I asked the hon. member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques a question, I wanted to know whether the process behind all this was flawed. There was a mistake in another budget implementation bill, and it had major repercussions on credit unions such as the Caisse Desjardins in Quebec. That mistake was discovered after the bill was passed by Parliament, at which point the situation had to be corrected.

I wonder whether my colleague can assure us today that in this 308-page bill there will not be similar mistakes that fly under the radar because the process is too quick for studying such lengthy bills.

[English]

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Mr. Speaker, I would have to say that as long as Parliament is inhabited by human beings, there is always the option and the possibility of errors happening, but we also have a system that is very quick to respond to those imperfections and to correct them. Certainly our finance minister has shown that many times.

One mistake that I can assure my colleague we will not make is increasing the cost of doing business for Canadian companies by

increasing their taxes or by implementing a carbon tax that would add significant cost and reduce the ability of companies to hire new people. We know that the creation of new jobs is one of the most important things that we can do in Canada to keep our economy strong.

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I agree with my hon. colleague that budget implementation plans are required to put into place the necessary legislation related to the budget.

However, I would like to ask him why this particular bill contains the description of the necessary requirements for a lawyer from the Province of Quebec to become a member of the Supreme Court. Why does it touch on labour relations in the public service? The matters are not related to the budget. They are quite separate and should be dealt with in separate bills.

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague will know that I am not a lawyer. I do not profess to be a lawyer or to understand all of the legal aspects of this bill, but as I look through even the summary of this bill, it becomes very clear that the technical amendments that are part of this bill are necessary for the smooth operation of government.

It is simply a matter of accumulating some of the technical amendments that have been on the back burner for many months, and in some cases years, and correcting the record so that the different departments can do their job effectively.

[Translation]

Mr. Jonathan Tremblay (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is a budget implementation bill, not a bill on the way Parliament operates.

I asked one of the hon. member's colleagues a question earlier. I asked him what he thought about the fact that, when the bill was introduced yesterday evening, some government members admitted that the people affected by this bill were not consulted.

Perhaps the hon. member did not hear that, but whether he heard it or not, does he think that this is a good attitude and a good practice?

[English]

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Mr. Speaker, I would concur with the answer given earlier by my colleague. Obviously we want everyone who has input to be able to provide that input, but we know that during the pre-budget consultation phase of budget 2013, every Canadian had access to give input online. We were welcoming input from every Canadian.

Members of Parliament—on this side of the House, at least—conducted many round tables to get input from different sectors of the economy, whether they were leaders of institutions, municipal leaders, job creators, CEOs of companies, or human resources people. We always want all the input we can get to create the best final product.

However, there will always be those who feel they were left out. We apologize for that, but it certainly was not our intent.

• (1250)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jonathan Tremblay (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first I would like to say that I will be sharing my time with the excellent member for Edmonton—Strathcona.

Bill C-4, the budget implementation bill, was introduced on Tuesday. That same evening, the government provided a briefing on the bill in English only. Since it was in English only, which is against the rules, the Conservatives had to start over last night, after the debate had already started. When the second presentation on Bill C-4 was given—this time in both languages—the Conservatives themselves admitted that they had not consulted everyone affected by the bill. The Conservatives are not doing their job. Their measures are flawed, haphazard, amateurish and disrespectful.

What is more, the Conservatives are once again imposing a time allocation motion. They are allocating only five days of debate to a third, botched omnibus bill that is 300 pages long and amends dozens of laws, many of which have nothing to do with the budget.

This shows just how little respect the Conservatives have for our democracy and our parliamentary structures. This lack of respect clearly demonstrates that the Conservative government is old and worn out and has no vision for the future of Canada and our various regions.

Once again, parliamentarians must debate and examine important changes, including some meant to correct errors made by the Conservatives themselves. This government is attacking Canadians' quality of life by gutting environmental protections, raising the price of consumer goods and doing nothing to protect consumers. Furthermore, the Conservatives have failed to kick-start the economy and create high-quality jobs.

With this bill, the Prime Minister is once again undermining the government's ability to help and protect Canadians. Workers are the ones who will suffer the consequences.

The most substantial and most reprehensible changes in the latest budget implementation bill will affect Canada's labour environment. This bill fundamentally changes Canadians' right to a healthy and safe working environment.

When workers' health and safety is being attacked, there is a problem. Yet that is exactly what this bill does. Indeed, it removes the powers granted to health and safety officers by the Canada Labour Code and gives those powers to the minister. Do the members opposite really believe that taking basic protections away from workers will go unnoticed?

In addition, it will be harder for employees to refuse to work in dangerous conditions. The NDP firmly believes that no worker should ever be forced to work in dangerous conditions. Why place nearly all powers related to health and safety in the hands of the minister? It is likely in order to be able to place employees and send them wherever the minister wants to send them.

Government Orders

We definitely see a pattern in the government's decisions in recent years. Employment insurance is an excellent example. The bill eliminates the Canada Employment Insurance Financing Board and gives the Minister of Finance the power to manipulate rates. Having an independent and accountable body to oversee EI financing was in fact a Conservative promise. Now that promise has been broken. This is just one more broken promise.

People from Charlevoix, the upper north shore, many regions in Quebec and the Maritimes remember the back-to-back Liberal and Conservative governments that shamelessly pillaged \$57 billion from the employment insurance fund, that artificially pushed premiums too high to surreptitiously tax people, or that artificially dropped premiums too low to prove that the program did not work and needed to be cut. Workers deserve better.

The bill also extends the \$1,000 hiring tax credit for small business. The NDP proposed a \$2,000 hiring tax credit that would not come out of the employment insurance fund and that would help businesses hire and train young workers.

• (1255)

The Quebec economy is built on small and medium-sized businesses. They create jobs in the regions. Côte-de-Beaupré, Île d'Orléans, Charlevoix, the upper north shore and Quebec City are no exception. There is also the fact that so many of our industries are seasonal. However, this government does not seem to care about our communities.

This bill also affects National Research Council Canada. Once again, the government is gutting a Canadian institution, just as it gutted some of our most respected scientific research institutions, just as it fired some of Canada's best scientists and researchers without consulting the scientific community and without evaluating the potential consequences on Canada's scientific capability and its international reputation. Myriad experts, scientists and civil servants were muzzled or fired for not toeing the Conservative line.

The budget implementation bill has the National Research Council in the crosshairs. The Conservatives are cutting nearly half the jobs, but are giving the president, whom they appoint, more authority. Wow, bravo.

The Conservatives made a mistake when they increased taxes on credit unions. This bill proposes changes to fix that mistake, which was made when they rammed the omnibus budget bill through the House.

As result of this mistake, credit unions were facing a tax hike of 28% rather than 15%. On this side of the House, we are very disappointed to see that the Conservatives have not learned from their mistakes and that they are once again using an omnibus bill. It was a bad decision to raise credit unions' taxes, but the Conservatives like raising taxes secretly or on the sly.

Government Orders

The NDP has been fighting tax evasion since the party was created. We support the various technical amendments in this budget implementation bill that seek to reduce tax evasion.

However, we find it troubling that the Conservatives are not taking the issue of tax havens seriously and are not cracking down on individuals and companies that do not pay their fair share of taxes. Let us not forget that, even as this government claims to want to do more to fight tax evasion, it is making cuts to the Canada Revenue Agency.

Another area that is affected is the public service, which is clearly being attacked in this bill. The changes being made to the Public Service Staff Relations Act do away with binding arbitration as a method of settling disputes. Why would a government make such a change if not to instigate labour disputes among public servants?

My colleague, the hon. member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, gave a very good speech about venture capital funds. The Conservatives are going ahead with their \$350 million tax hike on venture capital funds, despite the strong opposition of that sector and the fact that a lack of venture capital has a negative impact on the ability to start and grow businesses. The Conservatives are going after one of our country's most important economic drivers, and it does not make any sense.

In conclusion, we are currently dealing with a Conservative government that makes purely ideological decisions and that is hijacking the government process—both Parliament and responsibilities of the state—for its own partisan purposes. The government is sabotaging programs to make it easier to eliminate them. It is sabotaging our parliamentary structures and it is circumventing our election laws.

Because of a lack of time, I mentioned only a few aspects of this bill. I spoke about them in a fairly general way and there were some that I did not have time to talk about. We should have the time to debate every aspect of the bill. That is what happens when a government has contempt for democracy and our parliamentary structures.

• (1300)

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the members for Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord and Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques have demonstrated that labour-sponsored funds support SMEs. As my colleague pointed out, SMEs are strong economic engines.

The Conservatives are creating obstacles for small and medium-sized businesses by undermining these funds.

Does my colleague think that the Conservatives are truly good economic managers, as they claim to be, or is this simply a charade?

Mr. Jonathan Tremblay: Mr. Speaker, I think they know how to funnel money to their friends and to Conservative Party campaign contributors. They know how to manipulate the laws to do that.

As for venture capital funds, yesterday, the presidents of the FTQ and the CSN came to meet with people in Ottawa to suggest an agreement that would prevent the pillaging of millions of dollars from venture capital funds. They were open to investing more money in Canada and Quebec—outside Quebec too—and suggested

investing \$2 for every dollar of tax credit. However, this suggestion was turned down.

I hope that the Conservatives will wake up one day. The CSN and the FTQ said that they would continue to negotiate because this made no sense, since our economy sees a direct return on the money invested in these funds. It is good for the Canadian economy as a whole. They said they would continue to negotiate to find some common ground. I hope that the Conservatives will not keep their blinders on and that they will be open to maintaining this investment.

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle (Rivière-du-Nord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like my colleague to say a few words about the Canada Employment Insurance Financing Board Act.

The Employment Insurance Financing Board was created after our Liberal friends used the employment insurance fund for other purposes, namely to pay the bills. The board ensured that the contributions were not being used for partisan purposes and that the money that workers and employers were contributing to the fund was being used to pay unemployed workers in need.

By eliminating the Employment Insurance Financing Board, are the Conservatives signalling that it is their turn to dip into the EI fund and misuse that money again? What does my colleague think about this?

Mr. Jonathan Tremblay: Mr. Speaker, Liberals and Conservatives alike have figured out how to take advantage of the EI fund. They can take money directly out of the fund to eliminate deficits elsewhere, or, once that scheme is uncovered and it becomes politically difficult to keep up, they reduce the premium rate to make it appear as though the program is not working and is running a deficit, especially if they have taken from it.

That leads people to believe that the program is not working. This justifies the cuts and the content of the latest employment insurance bills, which particularly affects the people of my riding and all of eastern Quebec and Canada.

By leaving the premium rate in the hands of the minister, the Conservatives can increase or reduce it at their whim, depending on whether or not they want to take money out of the EI fund.

[English]

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to rise to speak to the latest tabled omnibus budget bill on behalf of the constituents of Edmonton—Strathcona.

I think many across western Canada will be discouraged that not much debate on this bill is being allowed because of closure, once again. What is of particular concern to those of us in the official opposition, and which I know will be shared by my constituents, is the fact that once again, we have a large omnibus budget bill, over 300 pages, that includes many policy and legal changes that merit discussion before the appropriate committee, an opportunity for Canadians and the appropriate experts to come forward and testify, and frankly, an opportunity to question the appropriate ministers.

Government Orders

Here we have many policy matters, including, for example, changes to appointments to the Supreme Court of Canada. Where are we supposed to direct our questions? It is to the Minister of Finance. This is a complete perversion, frankly, of the proceedings in the House of Commons.

Once again, we are calling for this to end. We have requested many changes, but the government seems to persist and does not want debate. It does not want the engagement of Canadians in these important matters. We are doing our best to try to hold the government accountable on spending. That is our constitutional responsibility.

Before I speak to some of the matters in the bill, and because of limited time I will have to pick and choose, I would like to mention the things we do not find in the budget bill.

First and foremost, we see nothing toward addressing the inequities our indigenous Canadians have suffered over far too many decades. There is no mention of new dollars to end the 2% cap on first nations education and services. There is no additional money to expedite specific and comprehensive land claims. I find this dumbfounding. Banks have called for action on this. First nations have called for this. Provincial premiers have called for the government to step up to the plate with additional staffing and resources to expedite the land claims, including along the path of the proposed gateway pipeline. What do we see in this budget? There is absolutely nothing to expedite that process.

We have heard concerns from those who have already signed on to comprehensive land claims. Where is the money to finally deliver on the commitments made under those claims? Those Canadians would like to participate in the economy the Conservative government lauds, but they are not able to move forward and participate in the economy, because they are struggling just to get by.

There is no additional money for an inquiry into missing and murdered women, despite the pleas from indigenous families across this country. It is just a travesty that there is still no money for this inquiry, which even the UN is calling for.

There is no commitment of additional monies that will likely be needed to complete the truth and reconciliation review and the release of data.

There is no money for our universities and technical schools in crisis, even in Alberta. We face the travesty of deep cuts to our universities and technical colleges at a time when, supposedly, the current government supports training so that all Canadians can participate in this burgeoning resource economy. However, they are being sliced. Where is the federal government? It could be helping with that. Where is the new money to reduce tuition so that all Canadians can have access to advanced education?

There is a lot of talk about helping consumers. What is the highest cost most Canadian families face? It is their electricity and power bills. Canadians have pleaded to bring back the incentive and support for home energy retrofits and retrofits for small and medium businesses so that they can compete. There is nothing in this budget to assist those consumers.

On pensions, despite the fact that almost all premiers now are onside to beef up the Canada Pension Plan, which unions are behind, as are the majority of Canadians, there is nothing in this budget.

Agriculture is one that really saddens me. Every time we stand up to speak, we get all of this talk back about the glories of how all Canadians are going to be able to benefit from CETA, the proposed new trade agreement with Europe, yet the Conservative government, in its wisdom, killed an 80-year-old program that gave assistance to small and medium farmers in the Prairies. The program had provided special research to make sure that on these sensitive lands, one could farm sustainably.

• (1305)

There were community pastures where small and medium farmers could graze their cattle. It was a successful program for both enabling the sustainability of the pastures and for these important members of our economy to continue contributing their tax dollars.

What did the government do? The government shut down those programs. Not only did it shut them down, it sold off the bulls that were provided to provide for more cattle. The government would not even provide feed during the interim period until the farmers could get away from the harvest and put bids on the bulls. I met with many of those farmers this summer who told me that they are being forced to sell off their herds. How is that helping Canadian farmers contribute to the economy and potentially benefit from this trade agreement?

Those are just some of the many matters missing from the budget bill, which supposedly would help all Canadians participate in the economy.

I would like to speak to Division 7 of Part 3, on disposal of the Dominion Coal Blocks. These lands in British Columbia have been the subject of a lot of controversy lately. There is an agreement on these lands between the Government of British Columbia and six first nations in British Columbia. Those first nations want to undertake forestry activities and have economic opportunity.

It is the understanding that some of these lands will not be sold off for metallurgical coal, to be shipped to China, or for coal gas methane. Instead, some of these lands are supposed to be protected for a future Flathead national park or wildlife preserve.

I am looking forward to some clarification in the House as to first, the first nations that will be directly impacted by these decisions, and second, the citizenry who have been negotiating in good faith with the government on setting aside these lands for the benefit of all Canadians.

Government Orders

The second issue I want to speak to is the phase-out of accelerated capital costs in mining. I simply have a question I look forward to having answered by one of the members of the government. The government says that it wants to incent and encourage mining entrepreneurs to create jobs and income in Canada, particularly in the north. I am looking forward to an explanation as to why these particular accelerated capital costs are being phased out. The government has committed, through the G8, to phase out and reduce its incentives and benefits to the fossil fuel industry, but I remain puzzled by this. Our party supports the mining sector, and we look forward to having an explanation for that one.

The third area is the Mackenzie Gas Project Impacts Act. Very simply, the government is shutting down a fund established in negotiations with all of the communities along the Mackenzie whereby they could be compensated for any impacts that were social or economic in nature. It was a fund that was specifically apportioned to individual communities. I look forward to an explanation as to why, unilaterally, the government has chosen to shut down that fund, to put those monies into general revenues, and to give the minister total discretion in how to disburse those funds. It does not sound like co-operative federalism with the Northwest Territories and the people of the north.

The final matter I would like to speak to is with respect to the changes to worker health and safety. It is deeply distressing that there has been a decision to take away the issue of defining dangerous work from a definition that has been provided in legislation. It provides a broad scope of work that a worker may consider dangerous. The worker then, under legislation, has the right to refuse to work. Instead, the government is assigning total power to the discretion of the minister to narrow that down. Why is there that great concern? It is because the government has been prosecuted and convicted of violating its own health and safety laws and is awaiting sentencing of up to \$100,000 and probation. Is this the way the government responds to its atrocious actions in failing to have basic health and safety protections in place for Canadian federal workers?

• (1310)

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member talked about cutbacks to community colleges, which obviously affects tradespersons.

I have been sitting on the natural resources committee for a couple of years, and every time companies appear at committee, their biggest complaint is that they have no tradespeople, such as electricians, welders, machinists, and mechanics. It has become obvious to me that Conservative members on the natural resources committee have not been listening to what these people are saying.

Could the member for Edmonton—Strathcona please tell me why she thinks these members are not listening to what people are saying at the natural resources committee?

• (1315)

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member who does fantastic work on our behalf in the natural resources area.

The concern we have raised repeatedly is this. The government speaks of the fact that we have a great skills shortage and, apparently, there is some question about that. The experts are debating that right now in the media. If we have a big skills shortage

and the government wishes to fill it with indigenous Canadians, then it has to give them basic education and skills so they can compete and apply for those jobs.

The second issue is that indigenous Canadians should have an equal right to any other Canadian to decide what they want to be educated in and what kind of jobs they want to pursue. They do not necessarily all want to be welders and pipefitters. A good number of them do, but a good number of them want to be doctors, teachers and parliamentarians. We remain deeply disturbed that the government is not removing this 2% funding cap on education.

An increasing number of indigenous youth are completing high school, but there is also a cap on assistance for higher education. Therefore, there are many frustrated people out there who would like to pursue other jobs.

Ms. Joyce Bateman (Winnipeg South Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to take the opportunity to ask the hon. member if there are any businesses in her riding that might benefit from the accelerated capital cost allowance, which we have put into Bill C-4, our new budget. This is going to have an impact of \$1.4 billion just for the two-year extension. That is significant. Are there any businesses in her riding that might benefit?

Also, are there any people with disabilities in her riding who might benefit from the \$15 million annually in perpetuity that we are funding so people who live with disabilities can be an integral part of our community, have more accessibility and be able to contribute?

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Speaker, in fact, there are many businesses and consulting firms in my riding that would love to compete. However, the concern is whether they are now going to be competing with Europeans who are going for the municipal and provincial contracts. It is a double-edged sword. I know many of them would welcome the opportunity to potentially work in Europe.

Government Orders

The problem is that one of the biggest sectors in my riding is the energy efficiency sector. The Conservative government, in its wisdom, yanked the very incentives that would create the expertise not only for Canada but to go overseas. The government has also shredded any incentives toward the development of renewable energy expertise and technology in my riding and therefore businesses cannot compete in Europe. In the meantime, the Europeans have moved forward and are now going to be selling equipment to us. It is a sad day. It is time for the government to step up and put its money into building Canada's sectors so it can compete equally with the Europeans.

Ms. Joyce Bateman (Winnipeg South Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am going to be splitting my time with the hon. member for Medicine Hat today.

I am so pleased to have the opportunity to rise on behalf of the citizens of Winnipeg South Centre and speak to my colleagues in the House of Commons about the economic action plan 2013.

As a chartered accountant, I am very proud to be part of a government that gives Canadians sound fiscal planning, job creation and economic growth.

As a mother, I am very grateful for the government's direction on long-term prosperity. We must always be mindful of how our spending affects future generations. We need to be responsible and ensure that our children start their lives without their futures mortgaged because of irresponsible tax and spend government. We have to ensure we do the best job possible for our children. It matters for their future.

Our government is acting to ensure that our children enjoy a prosperous future in Canada. On October 22, the hon. Minister of Finance tabled the economic action plan, part 2, Bill C-4. The bill provides support for job creators. It respects taxpayers' dollars and it closes tax loopholes to combat tax evasion and make it fair so when people are paying their fair share of taxes, they know someone else is also doing the same.

We made promises to Canadians to follow through and we are acting on those promises, the ability to ensure that we are delivering for Canadians, not dithering and talking about it.

Regarding the economic action plan of March 13, I would like to recap a few things regarding the economy, job creation and particularly tax cutting that we have already done for Canadians. Our budget laid the groundwork to reduce taxes for hard-working families, to reduce taxes for hard-working businesses that are creating jobs for hard-working families and to lay the groundwork for long-term prosperity.

We all know and have seen daily in the newspapers that by implementing Canada's economic action plan, Canada has experienced one of the best economic performances among the G7 countries, both during the global recession and throughout the recovery.

Canada has the lowest overall tax rate on new business investment in the G7 and our net debt to GDP ratio remains the lowest in the G7 by far, at 34.6%. I want to ensure that people realize what an accomplishment that debt to GDP ratio is, because our closest colleague is Germany at 57.2%. In fact, the average in the G7 is well

over 90% net debt to GDP ratio, so Canadians can and should be extremely proud of the efforts that this government has made to put us on a firm fiscal framework.

At the same time, we do not presume that we are out of the woods yet. We know the economy remains fragile and we are taking actions to ensure we are well protected. That is why we have created jobs. We have created more than one million net new jobs since the depths of the global recession in July 2009 and the vast majority of those jobs are full-time and in the private sector.

The unemployment rate is at its lowest level since 2008 and it is significantly lower than the United States.

● (1320)

We have extended the enabling accessibility fund by providing \$15 million a year in perpetuity. It is permanent funding to support community projects that improve accessibility, remove barriers and allow Canadians with disabilities to participate fully and contribute to their communities.

As well, economic action plan 2013 delivers a new building Canada plan that will provide over \$53 billion in predictable infrastructure funding. That is the largest and longest federal investment in job creating infrastructure in all of Canadian history.

We have introduced the accelerated capital cost allowance for new manufacturing machinery and equipment by increasing support to manufacturers. Just the two years of extension puts \$1.4 billion in the pockets of job creators, businesses that are making those important investments to get Canada working.

We have added \$1 billion to the strategic aerospace and defence initiative. As a member of the aerospace caucus, I feel it is very important to underline that 40 businesses with over 5,500 employees working in Manitoba will benefit tremendously from those investments.

Cutting taxes is what we do. We have colleagues in the NDP and Liberal Party who want to increase taxes. Our Conservative government believes in low taxes and leaving more money where it belongs, in the pockets of hard-working Canadian families and job-creating businesses.

As a proud Manitoban, I have never encountered an individual who wanted to pay more taxes. Recently, we have seen the anger of people who would much rather have a dollar in their pocket to spend on their children than adding 1% to the PST in the province. We are not just talking about cutting taxes, we are actually doing it.

Since 2006, we have cut taxes 160 times, reducing the overall tax burden to its lowest in 50 years. That tax reduction work has put \$3,200 on average more in the household account, in the personal income, of an average family of four. As a mother of an average family of four, I am very grateful. Parents know how to spend the money. Moms know how to spend the money.

Government Orders

We are a government that is reducing the tax cost to all families and ensuring that families have more money. We have done that by increasing the amount that Canadians can earn without paying any tax. We have reduced the lowest personal income tax rate to 15%. We have introduced pension income splitting for seniors. We have introduced tax-free savings accounts, which is the biggest tax free personal saving vehicle for Canadians since the introduction of the RRSP. We have cut the GST.

Just on that point, I saw an interesting quote that our colleague, the hon. member for Markham—Unionville, made on raising the GST. He said, “It’s an option. All I can say is that it is consistent with our approach”. This is a tax option and an approach that is consistent with the Liberal approach. The Conservative government lowers taxes.

We are so proud that the Prime Minister signed the CETA agreement. That will make an enormous difference. It is another accomplishment that adds more than \$1,000 on average to the average taxpayer’s income.

Not only will the agreement contribute to our significant economic well-being, we are a government that is committed to ensuring we are focused on job creation, economic growth and long-term prosperity, long-term prosperity not just for our generation but for all the generations to come. Our government is absolutely focused on this expenditure. We are doing that with Bill C-4.

We are making the right choices. We are making the hard choices. However, we are being responsible and ensuring that we will have a firm framework for all Canadians in the future.

• (1325)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, once again the government has been remiss. The most recent budget contains a huge error that doubles the tax rate for caisses populaires and credit unions. This situation was condemned last summer by the NDP. Now, buried deep in this bill is a correction to this huge Conservative mistake.

As the critic for co-operatives, I wonder why the government did not take this opportunity to restore the co-operative development initiative and measures to promote the capitalization of co-operatives?

Ms. Joyce Bateman: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for her very important question.

I would like to congratulate my colleague for her work on the aerospace caucus.

Unlike the NDP, and even the Liberal members, who are crazy for taxes, our Conservative government believes in low taxes and leaving money where it belongs, in the wallets of hard-working Canadian families, and also in the wallets of employers and job creators.

• (1330)

[*English*]

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my hon. colleague on her comments. I do not agree with them, but

she is certainly using all the proper words that her government wants her to use when it comes to cutting taxes.

Part of the government’s job is to invest in Canadians and to invest in the country. I will point out a few things to show it is clearly out of touch with, first, middle-class families who are struggling to find child care. A report from Martha Friendly, an expert on the issues of child care, talks about the \$17.5 billion the government has spent investing in families, as the government calls it, but there have been no child care places provided.

The second issue is the fact that we have 25% unemployment in our young people and between 200,000 and 300,000 unpaid internships. They are the only jobs that many of our young people can find and the only way they can get a foot in the door.

How can you stand there so proudly saying you are cutting taxes, when your job as a government is to make sure you are investing in people and providing opportunities?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Before I go to the member, I would again like to remind all hon. members to direct their comments and questions to the Chair rather than to their colleagues.

Ms. Joyce Bateman: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her questions, albeit misguided ones.

I am a mother of a 15-year-old and a 22-year-old. I have not seen many families who think they would rather take \$3,200 and hand it to the government instead of spending it on their children, on their family, on their children’s education, and on their children’s future. I am a member of a government that has given \$3,200 to every family, putting it in their pocket so that they can make decisions on how they choose to invest for their children.

I know we are very happy investing in the education of our children, and I know a lot of families feel the same way. Who better to be able to invest?

Furthermore, with Bill C-4 we are modernizing the Canada student loans program. We are very proud to be a part of such an essential part of enabling children to continue with their education as they become young adults. That is what we are about: making sure that we are giving the money to the people who can use it for their families.

Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour and privilege to stand here today to talk about Canada’s economic action plan 2013, a plan for jobs, growth, and long-term prosperity.

Bill C-4 will allow us to continue with the implementation of our economic action plan 2013. With that in mind, I would like to remind my colleagues of the many great things contained in the budget this year. I encourage all of my constituents, and indeed all Canadians, to visit the website at actionplan.gc.ca, where they will be able to find all of the pertinent information regarding the budget, including Bill C-4.

Government Orders

Let us start with the new building Canada plan, which would provide funds of over \$53 billion over 10 years. Part of that is the new building Canada fund. Economic action plan 2013 would provide \$14 billion over 10 years. Of that, \$4 billion will be found in the national infrastructure fund, which will support investments in projects of national significance. There is also a \$10 billion provincial-territorial infrastructure fund that would support projects at the regional and local level.

The new building Canada plan also contains a community improvement plan, which consists of an indexed gas tax fund and an incremental GST rebate for municipalities. All of this would equal over \$32 billion.

Last but not least, the new building Canada plan contains a P3 Canada fund, which would renew a project that already exists. We strongly believe that P3s are a good way to accomplish great things while saving taxpayers money.

I would like to talk about another major item in our economic action plan 2013. That is our plan to create high-paying jobs and help businesses succeed. This one contains many things that will be important to my riding.

One of the biggest items is the two-year extension of the accelerated capital cost allowance for new investment in machinery and equipment in the manufacturing and processing sector. As we all know, Alberta is Canada's beating heart when it comes to growth of industry in the energy sector. In my riding, I know that some of the local firms are looking at expanding their operations, and I think the accelerated capital cost allowance will be a major factor in encouraging them to make that decision. That means more jobs for the people of my riding of Medicine Hat. That is a good thing.

Economic action plan 2013 continues to build on what we have already worked on for some time with continuing investments in world-class research and innovation.

One of the most important items contained in the plan is that we would extend the temporary hiring credit for small business for one year. That is encouraging, and I know it will be beneficial to small businesses in my riding.

The Medicine Hat District Chamber of Commerce's executive director, Lisa Kowalchuck, said our budget is a well-thought-out budget because we want to reduce the deficit and there are no tax increases, and from a business standpoint, that's positive. She went on to praise the extension of the temporary hiring credit. It has helped local small businesses and has contributed to their hiring of new workers.

I am proud of our government's continued support. After all, thanks to our economic action plan, we have seen the creation of over one million net new jobs in Canada since 2009. The majority of those, 90%, are full-time positions, and nearly 80% of those are in the private sector. If we want to talk about good news, that is one great piece of news.

We also have a record to brag about when it comes to supporting families. Our record of tax relief means savings of over \$3,200 for a typical Canadian family of four in 2013. My colleague from Manitoba just expounded on that as a mother of four. Certainly she

was pleased to have that \$3,200 in her pocket to spend on her children.

Since 2006, we have cut the lowest personal income tax rate to 15%. We reduced the GST from 7% to 6% to 5%. We established the tax-free savings account. We introduced the children's fitness tax credit. We introduced the family caregiver tax credit. We introduced the universal child care benefit. We introduced the volunteer firefighter tax credit. I know some of my constituents are quite pleased with that one.

Continuing with our plan, I know that this year's phase includes many things that would assist farmers in growing their operations. I have a lot of farmers in my riding; those who grow wheat and barley are quite pleased with the fact that they can now sell their wheat to whomever they choose, including the Canadian Wheat Board. I think those farmers have seen record returns on their products since that change, but I digress.

● (1335)

Economic action plan 2013 contains many important points that will help farmers, and I would like to take a moment to enumerate a few of those things.

First, we are going to increase the restricted farm loss deduction limit. This measure in particular will help families that engage in part-time farming. We will raise the limit to \$17,500, meaning that part-time farmers would be able to apply that much money against their income from other sources. This limit has not been raised in 20 years, so that is definitely due.

Another item in the budget that I think will be good for my farmers, and indeed farmers all across Canada, is the increase in lifetime capital gains exemption. Budget 2013 proposes an increase of \$50,000 so that it would apply to capital gains up to \$800,000. Also, the lifetime capital gains exemption would now be indexed to inflation for taxation years after 2014. That is another thing that will assist them. I am sure my farmers are tickled pink.

In terms of clean energy, our government remains committed to that industry. With that in mind, we will provide an accelerated capital cost allowance for those who have invested in specified clean energy generation and conservation equipment. In a time when we are looking for innovation in the energy sector, I believe that this will help spur it on.

Another measure in this budget that will be beneficial to my constituents is the section on tariff relief for Canadian consumers. This measure is extremely important for young families, especially in my riding. I know that it can be a hassle, so economic action plan 2013 would give tariff relief to Canadian consumers. Specifically, we are cutting tariffs on all baby clothing and on sports and athletic equipment. I believe that this is good news for young families who have active kids.

Government Orders

On a final note, I would like to enumerate some of the budgetary measures that will help us face our labour shortages, which are an issue for many Albertans and Canadians. I receive letters all the time from constituents concerned about finding skilled people to fill their job openings in their small businesses. It is an ongoing issue, and I am glad to see that with this budget our government has addressed some of the problems.

First, we are creating the Canada job grant, which should provide \$15,000 or more per person, including the federal contribution and matching provincial-territorial portion and employers' portions, to ensure that Canadians are getting the skilled employees they are seeking. As a former employer, I know that employers know what skills their people need. I know a number of small business owners in my riding personally who will be investing that \$5,000 to get more trained employees. They would get an employee who can get the training that they need, whether it is a community college certificate, an apprenticeship, or training by a trade union. They would have a job at the end of it, and it would be a win-win. Who could argue with that? This is a win-win situation for all involved, and what is not to like about that?

We are also creating opportunities for apprentices by making it more practical and easier to get the experience needed to make the leap to journeyman status.

We are also aiming at assisting persons with disabilities to have an easier time accessing the labour market. That is an ongoing task, and it is one that I am proud of. This budget would create the Canadian employers' disability forum. The forum would be led by a number of Canadian businesses, like Loblaws, and would be managed by employers. It would be a place where they could come together to share ideas about the hiring and retention of persons with disabilities.

Finally, we are bringing reform to the immigration system with programs such as the new expression of interest immigration management system. It would allow for Canadian employers, provinces, and territories to select skilled immigrants from a pool of applicants that best meet Canada's economic needs. This is crucial to my constituents. Many of them rely on hard-working new Canadians as the backbone of their workforce.

I know you have given me the signal, Mr. Speaker, but I encourage all of my colleagues to vote "yea" for Bill C-4 so that we can continue to implement our action plan 2013.

I look forward to any questions from my colleagues.

• (1340)

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member did say at the very beginning that we should check out www.actionplan.gc.ca, so I did. The very first thing on the list is something called "Creating Opportunities in the Trades".

There we see a lovely video featuring Mike Holmes, in which almost all of the participants are men. They are learning all kinds of trades, under Mike Holmes' tutelage, I assume, though I am not sure. In the only places where women show up in this video, they are doing hair, doing fingernails, and preparing food.

Why is it that the Conservative government believes that women are not part of the economic action plan and that women are not available to learn all the trades in this country?

Mr. LaVar Payne: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question about women in the trades. I would suggest that hon. member also have a look at his television one of these days and watch how the economic action plan shows women in the trades. It shows them driving trucks. It shows them learning how to be welders. It shows Canadians that women can be part of the trades. Our government works toward helping those women get into the trades because they have the skills and the desire, and they can be great tradespeople right across this country.

• (1345)

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, several times my hon. colleague mentioned a record to brag about. I want to ask him whether he feels the following is something to brag about. Under the current government, we have added about \$160 billion to the national debt. It was very difficult to add to the debt the first two years because the Conservative government inherited massive surpluses from the competent Liberal administration that preceded it.

However, since that time, the Conservatives have added \$160 billion to the debt. That works out to about \$30 billion every year, which means \$1,000 of debt for every Canadian every year has been added to the national debt. I wonder if the member feels that is something to brag about and something that his children will be happy to inherit.

Mr. LaVar Payne: Mr. Speaker, that is a very interesting question indeed. In fact, if we start thinking about the deficit, I would like to think first about where that deficit was created. It was created by the Liberal government of Pierre Elliott Trudeau.

The opposition members tend not to recognize that there has been a global recession. In times of global recession, our government went forward, made the steps, and we are the best in the G7. We have created well over one million jobs. No other country in the G7 has done that. We are continuing to build our economic platform and continuing to do that with the new EU trade agreement. That is going to create more jobs, more opportunities for our government, and more opportunities for our farmers right across this country. There is not a province that will not benefit from that.

Mr. Ryan Leef (Yukon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague accurately pointed out the tariff relief measures that economic action plan 2013 proposes. Of course, he did not mention that it is \$76 million worth of tariff relief, which is exceptional. He talked about the baby clothing and sports equipment that would be subject to tariff relief. However, we would also enhance the adoption expense tax credit and we would expand tax relief for home care service workers, which is fantastic.

Would my hon. colleague talk about how those kinds of tariff reliefs would improve the conditions of people living and working in his riding?

Government Orders

Mr. LaVar Payne: Mr. Speaker, it is great to know that I have a colleague here who is supporting us in terms of tax and tariff reduction. Do members know what that means for Canadians? It means money in Canadians' pockets and in families' pockets. Do members know who spends that money better? It is better spent by the families, the mothers and the fathers.

We think about the old days when the Liberals were in power. Somewhere along the line there was \$40 million missing and we have never gotten it back. If the Liberals would return that \$40 million, we could certainly help many more Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, to begin, I would like to say that I have the honour and privilege of sharing my time with the member for Nanaimo—Cowichan.

As the member for LaSalle—Émard, I spent the summer talking with my constituents when I met them at various events or at their homes when I went door to door. They told me they were concerned about our democracy and the fact that they feel that members of the official opposition are having an increasingly difficult time having their voices heard in Ottawa. We can see that here today with yet another time allocation motion on an omnibus bill that is more than 400 pages long. It is a bit like the movie *Groundhog Day*. We have seen this before and we see it over and over again when we come back to the House of Commons.

I do not want to spend too much time on that unfortunate situation, despite the fact that it upsets me greatly. It prevents me, and every other member sitting in the House of Commons, from truly representing our constituents, and it prevents us from reading and studying this omnibus bill in detail.

My constituents told me they are concerned especially about the services that are customarily provided to Canadians. They are being eroded. I am thinking about those provided by Service Canada, those involving employment insurance and old age pensions, and Immigration Canada's services.

In addition, I can attest that in my constituency office, specifically, we see a lot of constituents who are upset that front-line services to Canadians are increasingly threatened. These are services that Canadians deserve but can no longer use—or they are being cut. Service Canada offices are being closed. Programs of all kinds are being closed. My constituents are really worried about this.

Moreover, it is becoming obvious that every time these omnibus bills are introduced—and these are actually budget bills—they contain mistakes. These bills are hastily put together. A lot of them could not be thoroughly studied and considered for lack of time. This has long-term consequences.

It is well known that this government is reluctant to rely on evidence and statistics and to conduct truly scientific studies to determine the impact of the bills introduced in the House. The government really has a strong dislike for what we know as evidence- and fact-based policy.

We see how this government has gutted Statistics Canada and how it is becoming increasingly difficult to obtain an accurate picture of the economic health of our country and our communities. Canada is

a vast and beautiful country made up of both great cities and small communities scattered from coast to coast. It will become more and more difficult to find out exactly what is happening all over this great country, as the government has deprived Statistics Canada of the tools it needs to build an accurate and realistic portrait that could help us, as parliamentarians, to make fair and informed decisions.

It is also becoming increasingly obvious that the hastiness in preparing these omnibus bills and massive budgets creates errors that have huge consequences. I will just talk about one of them.

• (1350)

A major mistake slipped into the last budget that more than doubled the tax rate on caisses populaires and credit unions. Again, this government has completely destroyed the program for credit unions, the Co-operatives Secretariat, as well as a program that was greatly appreciated by co-operatives across Canada, the co-operative development initiative.

We want small businesses to start up and become medium and large businesses. We have programs to help those small businesses. Why not do the same thing for co-operatives? No, after two or three years, the government decided just to eliminate the co-operative development initiative, which helped new co-operatives start up and become larger co-operatives.

This kind of decision did not take into account the realities facing existing co-operatives across Canada. The co-operative system is part of our heritage and our economic system. This government did not take that into account whatsoever. It does not realize how much co-operatives contribute to the Canadian economy. They create jobs, they participate in local economic development and, what is more, they are able to weather the ups and downs of our current economy.

On top of all that, they are 100% Canadian. They are never going to decide one day to pack up and relocate. They are well established here and are part of our lives.

Caisses populaires and credit unions are financial institutions that are established in communities across Canada. Unlike banks, they stay because they meet the needs of the communities.

The last budget ended up more than doubling the tax rate on caisses populaires and credit unions. This would have had disastrous consequences for those institutions.

That is what happens when the government introduces a mammoth budget bill that disregards what MPs and committees can bring to the table when they get a chance to study these bills in detail.

When the last budget bill was introduced, we asked that the bill be split up so that it could be studied in detail at the appropriate committees. The government refused, of course. It is the same thing this time around. We see that there is a lot in this bill, but nothing is really taken into account.

Statements by Members

I would once again like to talk about the contributions made by co-operatives, because since my appointment as the NDP critic for co-operatives, I have had the opportunity to meet with many associations, whether here in Ottawa, in Saskatchewan or in Quebec, and I will continue to consult such groups. Co-operatives are businesses that work in a number of sectors in Canada. As I mentioned, they make an important contribution to the Canadian economy.

In closing, I would like to remind the government that the co-operative sector is part of our economy and it deserves its fair share of support from the federal government.

• (1355)

The federal government can be an active partner in developing co-operatives and can act as a lever in partnership with the provinces and the co-operative sector.

This is not the last time I will be speaking about the co-operative sector, nor is it the last time I will criticize the attitude of this government, which is depriving all of us of the ability to thoroughly examine an omnibus bill that will have a tremendous impact on the lives of all Canadians.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The time provided for government orders has now expired. We will continue with questions and comments after oral question period.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[English]

SUPPORT FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

Mrs. Patricia Davidson (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as we celebrate Small Business Week, small business owners remain the backbone of our national economy, as the government keeps taxes down while ensuring job growth and a future full of opportunity for our children.

We know that these are hard measures to provide for in the midst of global economic uncertainty, but we also know the best way for a small business to hire more employees is to see its business grow, and the best way to grow a business is through increased trading opportunities.

Job growth and economic growth go hand in hand, thus the Canada-Europe trade agreement announced last week is a major win for Canadian small businesses.

I note that in 2010, small business accounted for over 50% of all Canadian exports to the EU. In Sarnia—Lambton, we have small business operators who will now be able to expand their trade into the EU due to the removal of tariffs, simplified border procedures and guaranteed temporary entry without a work permit. These measures will ensure further economic growth for Canadian small businesses, especially in Sarnia—Lambton.

[Translation]

NATIONAL SUMMIT ON ADVANCED SKILLS, DEMOGRAPHICS AND IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to draw to the attention of the House the need for skilled labour in Canada.

This week, the Association of Canadian Community Colleges held the National Summit on Advanced Skills, Demographics and Impact of Technology, which was attended by leaders from Canada's education and economic sectors. The resulting discussions and undertakings just how important a role our colleges play in developing tomorrow's workforce.

Canada has a workforce. Our job is to develop this workforce and help Canadians match their skills to prevailing labour needs. This requires greater collaboration with and support for the provinces and educational institutions, as well as entrepreneurs.

Therefore, I invite my colleagues to congratulate and encourage the Association of Canadian Community Colleges. Together, we will build the skilled workforce needed to tackle the challenges that await Canada in the 21st century.

* * *

[English]

REFORM PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Mr. Speaker, 20 years ago, 52 Reform MPs stormed Ottawa to change things. We called for balancing budgets. We promoted lower taxes for families and business. We fought for rebalancing the justice system to protect society and to give victims rights in the process. We pushed for more accountability for taxpayers' dollars. We have delivered in all of these areas.

We also promoted democratic reforms, and our government has tried to pass legislation to elect senators with term limits meaning no more senators for life or senators until age 75. There is still work to be done in this area of democratic reform, but we will keep at it.

This group of 52 MPs, backed by tens of thousands of members and millions of supporters, were mocked and rejected by the national media and the establishment. However, as members know, these Reformers have made a real difference over the past 20 years and will continue into the future, and Canada is truly better for it.

* * *

SUPPORT FOR SMALL BUSINESS

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is Small Business Week and on behalf of the Liberal caucus I rise to pay tribute to the thousands of middle-class Canadians who work each day to build and expand their small business.

Small businesses employ 90% of the private sector workforce and account for 40% of the GDP. Despite this, yesterday I received a call from Wanita, a constituent who operates a clothing business from her home. Wanita needs help to grow, but unless she incorporates, a very expensive thing to do, the current government has slammed the door on her.

The Conservative government crows about increasing the GDP, but this so-called success is not being felt around the nation's kitchen tables. Saying one has a plan for small business is not a plan.

The government needs to start focusing on the needs of smaller business. Entrepreneurs expect better as we mark Small Business Week. I call upon the government to take these expectations seriously. Big business is not the only business.

* * *

POLIO

Mr. Brad Butt (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, October 24 each year is World Polio Day, a day when people around the world organize activities to shine a spotlight on the importance of global polio eradication.

As a proud Rotarian, I stand with thousands of others in Canada to thank the Rotary, the Gates Foundation and our government for co-funding a major international effort to vaccinate our fellow world citizens to prevent this terrible disease.

The eradication of polio is on target, thanks to an unrelenting global effort, an effort in which Canada was at the forefront as the first country to donate to the global polio eradication initiative. Canada has been and remains a staunch ally in the global effort to immunize millions of children against the disease.

Earlier today, members of my home club, the Mississauga-Meadowvale Rotary Club, were at the Meadowvale GO station handing out pamphlets and seeking continued donations for polio treatment.

Let us continue to make the pledge that we will all work together to eradicate polio from our planet once and for all.

* * *

● (1405)

[*Translation*]

BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

Every day in Canada, 65 people are diagnosed with breast cancer, the most common form of cancer in women over the age of 20. While the survival rate is improving, this is still the second-deadliest form of cancer in the country.

In recent weeks, thousands of Canadians from one end of the country to the other have participated in various activities to increase awareness and raise money for research. I would like to thank them for their efforts and their dedication.

Thanks to them, their dedication and their work, the battle against cancer will soon be won.

Statements by Members

[*English*]

YORK REGION WOMEN'S SHELTER

Ms. Lois Brown (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last weekend I attended Hope in Purple Heels, a community fundraiser held at Upper Canada Mall in Newmarket in support of Belinda's Place.

It was a tremendous event that raised over \$150,000 toward the building of York region's first-ever shelter for homeless women.

Upon opening its doors in 2015, Belinda's Place will give women without a home an opportunity to rebuild their lives and start anew. The driving force behind this cause has been a team of community leaders and local philanthropists led by Debora Kelly.

I invite all members today to join me in saluting Deb Kelly, the Belinda's Place community team, and the individuals and businesses in York region and beyond who have helped turned this vision of hope into a reality.

* * *

BILL THAKE

Mr. Gordon Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I wish to recognize the passing of Bill Thake who, until his death at age 77 on June 26 of this year, was the longest-serving municipal politician in Ontario.

He was first elected to Westport village council in 1961 and became mayor in 1969. He retained that position until his untimely death.

Bill, as he was known to everyone, was the kind of hard-working, honest man whom everyone wants to represent them. Frugal in his own life, he treated taxpayers' dollars with the greatest of respect. The advice that he gave everyone was, "Never make a promise you can't keep and always tell the truth".

As well as mayor, he served four terms as warden of the United Counties of Leeds and Grenville and sat on many other boards and committees.

Bill is survived by his wife, Marlene; his daughter, Cindy; his son-in-law, Chris; and two grandsons.

He was a good friend to me and he will be missed by many.

* * *

KILLER WHALES

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, time is running out to save the southern resident killer whales. These most magnificent creatures not only hold an iconic place in first nations culture, they also drive our tourism industry. Most importantly, orcas are a key indicator of ecosystem health. That is why I am tabling today a motion calling for an action plan to protect this endangered species under the Species at Risk Act.

Statements by Members

Over the past year, I have met with local stakeholders to develop an action plan with broad-based local support that will address key threats the orcas are facing. This motion calls for research and monitoring funding from the federal government, implementing programs to decrease chemical pollution in the Salish Sea, improving chinook enhancement programs, and measures to reduce noise levels and other disturbances orcas face on a daily basis.

We have waited for the federal government to act since 2003, when the southern resident killer whales were first listed as endangered. Since then, their numbers have dropped to just 81. We must act now to save these whales, which not only inspire us with their beauty but remind us all of the fragility of the ecosystem that sustains life in and around the Salish Sea.

* * *

● (1410)

ELECTIONS CANADA

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadian values of decency and fairness require each of us to be accountable for our debts. Strangely, failed Liberal leadership candidates do not believe that this principle applies to them.

Recently, a lawyer for a failed Liberal leadership candidate, the former MP Ken Dryden, bragged that Dryden will not even attempt to pay back the money he owes.

What is more, Elections Canada knows and openly admits that it knows that this loan is unlikely ever to be repaid. Elections Canada said that it lacks the power to investigate these loans of the failed Liberal leadership candidates.

The current law gives the power to the Commissioner of Elections Canada to investigate whether anyone has used loans to circumvent donation limits. A full-scale investigation is required to determine if Liberals used loans to wilfully exceed legal donation limits.

What is preventing Elections Canada from doing its job? I call on Elections Canada to get to the bottom of this for all Canadians.

* * *

ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when the original proposal for riding boundaries was released, northern NDP MPs recognized instantly they were not in the best interest of northern Ontario. Sticking to rigid population formulas in our vast region undermined effective representation and, oh boy, did northerners respond. They knew it was their fight, too. On their own, over 70 municipalities passed resolutions to keep the 10 ridings. Thousands of faxes, letters, and emails poured in to keep their ridings as they were.

It is to the credit of northerners for speaking up for fair and democratic representation. Together, we fought successfully to keep communities of interest and language intact. That is democracy. That is appropriate representation by our MPs. Strangely, Conservative MPs sat on the sidelines rather than represent their constituents.

The commission says that we need a law to protect our 10 ridings. We stand with the north on this. Why will northern Conservative MPs not do the same and support my bill?

WORLD POLIO DAY

Mr. Dan Albas (Okanagan—Coquihalla, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today is World Polio Day, and Canada was recently commended for delivering on its commitments in regard to transparent and accountable development assistance by the respected efficacy group “Publish What You Fund”. I am pleased to report that Canada ranked in the top 10 in the world, as our government continues to ensure the effective and efficient delivery of development assistance to those around the world who need this development assistance that Canada can provide.

I mention this as, unfortunately, Canada often missed its targets under the Liberals, and we all know the NDP has voted against every effort our government brings forward to assist people.

Our government will continue to ensure that Canadians can all take pride in our global leadership development assistance focused on delivering concrete results at the front line for those who really need it.

* * *

UNITED NATIONS DAY

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate United Nations Day. This important day marks the anniversary of the entry into force of the UN charter in 1945.

The United Nations is committed to maintaining international peace and security, refugee protection, disaster relief, counter-terrorism, the advancement of women and children, to name a few. There were 193 countries that came together in pursuit of these honourable goals. This international organization reaches every corner of the globe, and this year alone the UN has come together on armed conflict, human rights, and the environment.

With these facts, Canadians are understandably alarmed about why the Prime Minister consistently demonstrates such contempt for the UN when he goes to New York but refuses to speak to the assembly. Under his watch, Canada lost its seat at the Security Council. He openly disrespects the organization and has obstructed climate change negotiations.

Canada works best when it is a leader among nations. Our country must restore its reputation and work with other countries and institutions such as the United Nations.

• (1415)

IMMIGRATION

Mr. Costas Menegakis (Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government remains on track and committed to meeting our goals in reuniting families faster, despite the Liberal legacy of massive immigration backlogs. Under the Liberals, families were waiting up to eight years to be reunited. That is unacceptable, and our government has worked hard to fix the Liberal backlog. In fact, under our government, wait times are down and on track to be cut in half.

The facts speak for themselves. On average, 80% of spousal and dependent cases are completed within 10 months. Parent and grandparent sponsorship applications are completed within 59 months. In 2012 and 2013, we have admitted the highest level of parents and grandparents in 20 years. That is 40% more than under the Liberals.

On this side of the House, we recognize the importance of reuniting families faster.

* * *

[Translation]

PRIME MINISTER OF CANADA

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister put on a quite a show yesterday. He played the victim. Poor thing. Too bad his antics do not hold water.

He personally hired Nigel Wright, Ray Novak, Chris Woodcock, and all the other amateur wheeler-dealers. He personally chose Mike Duffy after a selection process that was less rigorous than what Canadians do to vet a babysitter, but apparently he is the victim.

Conservative members know that the Prime Minister's henchmen were involved in this scheming and that he is too much of a control freak to be unaware. The Conservatives like to look tough, but they are too wimpy to stand up to the Prime Minister's Office, except of course, for the hon. member from Edmonton—St. Albert.

Is there someone else, anyone else, who has enough of a spine to tell us what happened behind closed doors in the Langevin building?

Today is my hon. leader's birthday, and I have a gift suggestion for the Conservatives: they can stop appointing fraudster senators. No, wait, they can stop appointing any senators, period.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government is focusing on what is important to Canadians: job creation and economic growth.

Last week the Prime Minister scored for Canadians by signing a historic trade agreement with the European Union.

Today the Minister of International Trade and the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness are in Montreal to talk to Quebecers about the benefits of this agreement.

Key Quebec economic sectors, such as advanced manufacturing, metal products and minerals, as well as agricultural products, are

Oral Questions

being given a chance to benefit from access to a market of 500 million wealthy consumers.

Unfortunately, the NDP and its anti-trade allies, such as the Council of Canadians, are misleading Canadians about this important agreement. They maintain that it will hinder our ability to create jobs. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Our government will continue to protect the interests of Canadian workers by opening new markets for Canadian businesses.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

ETHICS

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, at the beginning of the scandal, the Prime Minister said that Nigel Wright was an honourable man. He sang his praises until he found out that the \$90,000 cheque was illegal. Then, the Conservatives showed Nigel Wright the door, saying that he was the only one who was aware of the cheque. No one else in the Prime Minister's Office knew about it. That is what the Prime Minister told us on June 5.

Yesterday, the Prime Minister told a completely different story. He admitted that many people in his entourage knew about the cheque.

Why did he say one thing on June 5 and just the opposite yesterday? Why did the Prime Minister once again change his version of the facts?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is completely incorrect. Mr. Wright admitted that what he did was wrong. He took responsibility for his actions. Obviously, he informed very few people. The reality is that Mr. Wright did those things with his own money. He took responsibility for his actions and that is what we expect from people.

[English]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister told Canadians in the House on June 5 that no one else in his entourage knew and yesterday he said just the opposite.

On Tuesday, Mike Duffy said:

I was called at home in Cavendish by Ray Novak, senior [aid] to the Prime Minister. He had with him Senator LeBreton....Senator LeBreton was emphatic: The deal was off.

How could Mr. Novak threaten to cancel a deal that the Prime Minister told the House Mr. Novak knew nothing about? How is that possible?

• (1420)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the NDP insists on taking Mr. Duffy's view that he is somehow a victim in this matter.

Oral Questions

Mr. Duffy's expense claims were inappropriate. He knew that. He knew the expectation was that he would pay them back. He did not do that and as a consequence he is no longer a member of the Conservative caucus. That was the—

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is not about Mike Duffy. It is about the Prime Minister, and the victims are Canadians.

Last May, the Prime Minister's Office published details of the Conservative caucus meeting on February 13. The Prime Minister's own spokesperson said, "The Prime Minister did not mention Duffy or any other senator by name".

Yesterday, the Prime Minister claimed that he did single out Mike Duffy by name. Both of those things cannot be true. Which one is true, which one is false? He is changing versions again.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, the matter of the expenses of two senators, including Mr. Duffy, was raised in caucus. In response, I was extremely clear. I said, "You cannot claim expenses you did not incur". That message was also delivered personally to Mr. Duffy at the end of the meeting.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Prime Minister started out by saying that he told Mike Duffy that his expenses were inappropriate. That was his first version of the facts. Then, he said that Mr. Duffy's expenses were technically within the rules.

Why are there, once again, two versions of the facts? Which one is true? Were Mike Duffy's expenses against the rules or technically within the rules? The two cannot both be true. Which of the two versions is true?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, I have been very clear on this subject.

[*English*]

The issue here is not whether one can argue whether or not one can bend the rules and interpret the rules in such a way as to do something that is clearly inappropriate.

It is clearly inappropriate to try and collect travel expenses when one is living at a residence he or she has had for many, many years. That is clearly inappropriate. It should not be permitted. It cannot be permitted. In the Conservative caucus, it will not be permitted.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Prime Minister said that he did not threaten to expel Mike Duffy from the Senate at "that particular time".

When did the Prime Minister threaten to expel Mike Duffy from the Senate?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have made it very clear. We have made it crystal clear. I think every Conservative member understands it. We expect people to act in ways that respect rules and show integrity. If they do not do that, they cannot expect the support of their colleagues, they cannot expect the support of their leader and they cannot expect to stay in the Conservative caucus.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when Ray Novak was the Prime Minister's principal secretary, he was directly involved in covering up the Conservatives' scandal and helped hide the Prime Minister's involvement. The Prime Minister rewarded him for his potentially criminal involvement in this scandal by appointing him chief of staff.

Why does the Prime Minister think it is acceptable to reward potentially criminal behaviour?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, these allegations are untrue and are unfounded. The reality is that the Senate is in the process of determining consequences for senators who acted inappropriately. The Liberal Party and Liberal senators are the ones who are trying to prevent this from happening.

[*English*]

It is unacceptable. Senators are finally expressing a desire to deal with this and Liberal senators should get out of the way and support dealing with it.

● (1425)

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister should call Senator Segal.

This has to do with how the Prime Minister encourages and promotes corrupt behaviour in his own office. Ray Novak participated in what appears to be extortion and covering up the Conservative bribe, trying to sweep the whole scandal under the rug. What prime minister would punish the chief of staff by promoting him?

We had Bruce Carson, Nigel Wright, and now Ray Novak. Why does the Prime Minister choose to surround himself with people with such appalling ethical standards?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Mr. Wright has been clear. The decision to repay Mr. Duffy with his own money was his and his alone. He informed very few people.

The allegations contained in that question are completely false and designed to do one thing and that is to deflect attention from the fact that it is the Liberal senators and the Liberal Party that refuse any reform in the Senate and refuse any attempt to discipline any senators who have behaved inappropriately.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, here is another name for the list: Chris Woodcock. Mr. Woodcock was the Prime Minister's go-to guy when he needed problems mopped up, sort of like a cleaner. He was sent the details outlining the deal and the bribe to silence Mike Duffy, but instead of going to the police he prepared a plan to cover it up. What was his punishment? He received a promotion to the job of chief of staff for the Minister of Natural Resources.

Was this promotion a reward for his role in this cover-up, or was it to distance him from the Prime Minister's own ethical lapses?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Once again, Mr. Speaker, those allegations are completely false.

Oral Questions

Mr. Wright himself has said he took the decision with his own funds. Mr. Wright, to his credit, recognized that decision was totally wrong and resigned.

Some people in the Liberal Party should recognize the same thing and take the appropriate action.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, after firing Nigel Wright, the Prime Minister told Canadians in the House that absolutely no one else—not a few, no one else—knew about the deal between Duffy and Wright. Now he admits that top Conservatives actually did know about the scheme, but they kept him in the dark knowingly and they allowed him to make false statements to Parliament. If that is true, why did he not fire any of them?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Once again, Mr. Speaker, I addressed that matter months ago.

Mr. Wright made this decision. He has been very clear. He informed very few people. It was his own decision and his own initiative. Any insinuation or any suggestion that I knew or would have known is incorrect. As soon as I knew, I made this information available to the public and took the appropriate action.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I refer the Prime Minister to *Hansard* of June 5. There was no “very few” in there. It was “nobody”.

[*Translation*]

We all know that at the beginning of this story, Mike Duffy categorically refused to reimburse his expenses. He said that he had done nothing wrong. All of a sudden he changed his mind and announced that he would reimburse the money.

When Nigel Wright told the Prime Minister that, did the Prime Minister wonder why Duffy all of a sudden wanted to pay back the money? Did he at least ask?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Mr. Duffy is the one who informed Canadians that he had reimbursed his expenses.

[*English*]

It was Mr. Duffy himself who announced on national television that he had repaid these expenses. He announced that he had taken out a loan against his personal assets to repay these expenses.

That was obviously not correct. It was completely false, and for that reason, when that was proven to be false and showed up to be false, he was expelled from the Conservative caucus.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what has been proven to be false and turned out to be false is that no one else knew about it, when 13 people knew about it. He has not fired anybody.

[*Translation*]

Did Nigel Wright, Ray Novak, or Carolyn Stewart Olsen threaten to expel Mike Duffy if he did not accept their \$90,000 agreement?

[*English*]

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Again, Mr. Speaker, he alleges that many people knew about this. That is simply not correct.

It was Mr. Wright's decision, using his own resources and by his own admission, documented, he told very few people.

The fact of the matter is that it is the virtually universal view in this party that if a person cannot follow rules, cannot respect the standards of integrity in their behaviour, people do not want them to be a member of the caucus of the Conservative Party.

• (1430)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Senator Carolyn Stewart Olsen is implicated in the exact same scandal as Mr. Brazeau, Mr. Duffy and Ms. Wallin, yet she is not facing the exact same consequences as Mr. Brazeau, Mr. Duffy, and Ms. Wallin.

Why? Is it because she is a close friend of the Prime Minister?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is no proof to support that allegation.

[*English*]

The hon. member is now just starting to throw mud without any facts whatsoever. The senator herself has said that is not correct.

I am not aware on what basis he is saying that, but when I look at the NDP I remember the old saying, “the more we throw mud, the more we lose ground”.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Pamela Wallin and Mike Duffy were travelling on the taxpayers' dime for Conservative fundraising events. The Prime Minister was present at these events. Who did the Prime Minister think was paying the expenses?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Once again, Mr. Speaker, we know that parliamentarians of all parties travel on parliamentary and party business. We know this. What is relevant is whether they respect the rules that are in place and the spirit of those rules.

When they do not respect the rules or the spirit of the rules, we expect corrective action to be taken. If we do not have corrective action, we expect there to be consequences.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, senators' travel expenses go through the roof during federal general elections, a whopping \$1.5 million of taxpayers' money, which the Prime Minister says he is concerned about.

If he is so concerned about taxpayers' money, why did he join with the Liberal Party yesterday to vote against an NDP motion that would have at least restricted the ability of senators to use taxpayers' money to help political parties in their campaigns?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Election expenses are reported by the parties. Mr. Speaker, the reality is that parliamentarians, people who are in legislatures, have partisan views and partisan affiliation. We expect them to be transparent about those things.

The solution is not to have senators or anybody else pretend they are non-partisan. It is to have them elected so they are accountable to the Canadian people.

Oral Questions

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, how is that going, the elected Senate?

The Conservatives have had a bill about Senate reform on the books for two years. How many times have they called it? Zero. So much for their credibility on reforming the Senate.

The Prime Minister told the House on February 13 that he had personally reviewed Pamela Wallin's expenses and vouched for them.

Was the Prime Minister misleading Canadians, or did he not understand a simple report, as the rest of them claim? Did he not understand that most of that report was about partisan political activities for him and the Conservative Party?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, the member knows very well that what I said was that all of the expenses of Senator Wallin and indeed all of the expenses of the Senate would be examined and appropriate action would be taken. Those examinations of the case of Senator Wallin have been taken, and the Senate is now trying to take appropriate action, as it should.

• (1435)

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the cheque is in the mail.

They write this stuff down in Parliament. It was February 13, and Canadians can go and check it.

[*Translation*]

How many senators participated in election activities with this Prime Minister, and who paid for their travel? We want a full report. It is taxpayer money, and Canadians deserve to know for a change.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative Party reports on its spending during elections.

[*English*]

There are rules in place for reporting election expenses. That is what the Conservative Party does. I wish the NDP were just as transparent with some of the union expenditure it gets!

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, how many is a few?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, Mr. Wright has been very clear on that in his court filings. He has been very clear on all of the facts. They are in black and white. Mr. Wright says very clearly that the decision was taken with his money. It was his decision and his alone, and he admits that this was the wrong course of action. He takes full responsibility for that decision. He is being held accountable, as it should be.

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is the cover-up that transformed Mike Duffy's scandal into the Prime Minister's scandal. It is bad enough for the Prime Minister's chief of staff to try to buy a parliamentarian's complicity for \$90,000, but the cover-up did not end there. It was elaborate. It began last December. There were gag orders, a communications plan, threats, intimidation, and a plot to sandbag the Deloitte audit and corrupt an official Senate report.

What questions did the Prime Minister ask his staff about the execution of this scheme?

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the relevant fact here is that on February 13, when Senator Duffy approached the Prime Minister to try to justify his inappropriate expenses, the Prime Minister was very clear to Senator Duffy that he should repay any inappropriate expenses he had. It was very clear.

At the same time, let us contrast this to the lack of leadership of the Liberal leader who is prepared to invite back disgraced Liberal Senator Mac Harb into his caucus, or the failed leadership of the leader of the NDP, who waited 17 years to tell authorities that he was offered a bribe.

Canadians know who they can trust with public finances, and that is this Prime Minister.

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, obfuscation will not work. The cover-up developed over a period of months. It was committed to paper and put in the hands of the Prime Minister's director of issues management. At least a dozen of the Prime Minister's most senior officials were involved, including lawyers.

As the plot thickened around Mr. Duffy, there was huge publicity about all the trouble dogging the Prime Minister's hand-picked star senator and Mr. Wright, yet the Prime Minister did not ask a single question, nor was he told that his answers to Canadians in May and June were false. How is that plausible? How could the staff be so incompetent?

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again, the Prime Minister was very clear. On February 13 he was approached by Senator Duffy. He told the senator that he had to pay back any inappropriate expenses that he had incurred. At the same time, the government has put forward and the Senate has put forward a number of accountability measures with respect to senators' expenses. Right now in the Senate we have further measures to protect the Canadian taxpayers, and it is the Liberal Party that is blocking those attempts to see that Canadian taxpayers are protected. That is the lack of leadership that we have come to expect from the Liberal Party, and of course we always expect that from the NDP.

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians hold the Prime Minister accountable for the corrupt behaviour of his staff and the people he appoints to public office. He gave the orders to fix the Duffy problem. That unleashed an elaborate cover-up, illegal conduct described in writing. It involved every important person in the Prime Minister's entourage. It went on for months, but we are asked to believe that the Prime Minister was completely oblivious. He was told nothing. He asked nothing.

What sort of mentality prevails in the Prime Minister's inner circle that led all of them to believe that such corruption was okay?

Oral Questions

• (1440)

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the Prime Minister just said, on February 13 he instructed Senator Duffy to pay back any inappropriate expenses that he had incurred. Mr. Duffy, in fact, went on TV and claimed that he had done just that by mortgaging his home.

We hear this from a member of the Liberal Party. We are still looking for the \$40 million that had gone missing.

What Canadians know is this: when it comes to respecting taxpayers' dollars, they can trust this Prime Minister and this party to make sure that those dollars are respected.

* * *

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in 2006, the Conservative Party's election platform indicated that a Conservative government would ensure that government whistle-blowers were protected. However, when Sylvie Therrien reported that there were fraud quotas for EI investigators, she was dismissed.

It is so common to hear the Conservatives say one thing and do exactly the opposite that I have to ask, are there still any Conservatives with principles to keep the promise made to all the Sylvie Therriens in the public service?

[English]

Hon. Candice Bergen (Minister of State (Social Development), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the decision to dismiss this individual was made by department officials. We do support their decision.

Service Canada officials have used the same system to find and stop false EI claims since 1993. That is in order to ensure that Canadians who have paid into the EI system will have it there when they need it.

This also gives me the opportunity to talk about our government's job creation. Unemployment rates are at their lowest since September 2008. That is good news for Canadians.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is rather odd that public servants have to live with all the bad decisions.

Sylvie Therrien did the right thing by blowing the whistle on EI benefit quotas. As the Conservatives said before they were corrupted by power, quotas are a bad practice. Not only did the Conservative platform seek to protect whistle-blowers, but it even mentioned rewarding them. This just underlines the hypocrisy of this government.

Were the whistle-blowers involved in the Liberal sponsorship scandal the only ones who deserved protection, or does this protection apply to all whistle-blowers?

[English]

Hon. Candice Bergen (Minister of State (Social Development), CPC): Mr. Speaker, Service Canada has been clear. There are no

quotas. Service Canada has also been clear that the processes have been in place since 1993.

Shame on the member for making these comments about Service Canada officials and our officials, who are doing their jobs to ensure that the integrity of EI remains.

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the NDP has been sounding the alarm for months about the Conservatives' attack on seasonal industries. Now the government is finally admitting the changes made to EI for people on fishing incomes are causing hardship. In one case in particular, the cuts were more than 50%, so it was less than \$200 per week.

Will the minister acknowledge this mistake, stand up, and apologize to these fishing families and recognize the fact that these changes need to be put on hold?

Hon. Candice Bergen (Minister of State (Social Development), CPC): Mr. Speaker, actually, that technical error is being corrected in the BIA act, so I would expect the member to stand up when the vote comes and support the budget implementation act to correct it.

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, undoubtedly I will be up on my feet again, bringing other examples of what the government is doing to working people to their attention.

Let us talk for a second again about Sylvie. There was once a time when the Conservative government said that it would protect whistle-blowers. That time has clearly long passed. Sylvie Therrien blew the whistle on the quota system set up by the government for EI and blew the whistle on their home inspections, and the government fired her.

Will the minister explain why it is that the government has now gone to war with whistle-blowers instead of supporting them, standing up behind them, for what it is they are bringing attention?

Hon. Candice Bergen (Minister of State (Social Development), CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, the decision to dismiss this person was made by officials at the department. We support that decision.

I would go back, though, to the member's assertion about the budget implementation bill and suggest that he actually read it. It was very clear from his previous question that he has no idea what is in the BIA. He has no idea how it is benefiting Canadians and benefiting Canadians in his region.

It is shameful. The member needs to read it before he asks a question.

* * *

• (1445)

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mrs. Stella Ambler (Mississauga South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, every year around the world, millions of girls as young as eight or nine years old are forced into marriage. Some suggest the number could be as high as 14 million a year. This is utterly wrong, and we have a duty to say so.

Oral Questions

Through the maternal, newborn, and child health initiative, Canada has committed nearly \$3 billion over five years to help women and children lead longer, healthier lives. This is in addition to the almost \$14 million in support the country has provided toward ending sexual violence and encouraging the full participation of women in emerging democracies.

Will the Minister of Foreign Affairs please update the House on this government's efforts to halt the practice of early, child, and forced marriage around the world?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government has made it a priority to fight the scourge of child, early, and forced marriage. This is why Canada, today, will introduce the first-ever stand-alone resolution at the United Nations General Assembly against child, early, and forced marriage. This resolution calls for the protection of these children and calls on the General Assembly to take action to bring an end to this barbaric practice.

I am also pleased to announce today that Canada will contribute an additional \$5 million to fight early and child marriage around the world.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, maybe we will actually provide services for those who are victims of rape.

While the government is refusing to sign the Arms Trade Treaty, Conservatives are quietly removing export controls on military weapons and military equipment. We know armoured vehicles made in Canada were used in Bahrain during the crackdown on protestors there.

Why does the government want to make it easier for Canadian weapons to end up in the wrong hands?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in fact, the hon. member has it all wrong. The items being proposed for de-listing will continue to be under existing export controls. What we are trying to do is align our list with that of the U.S. so that Canadian companies will not be put at a disadvantage. This is being done in response to the Emerson report. We will be making sure that the public is consulted every step of the way.

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are refusing to sign the Arms Trade Treaty, and at the same time, very quietly, they are trying to remove export controls on Canadian military weapons and military equipment. We know armoured vehicles made in Canada were used in Bahrain by the authorities during the crackdown on protestors.

Why are the Conservatives taking the risk that Canadian military equipment will end up in the wrong hands?

[English]

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said, the items that are being de-listed will continue to be subject to export controls. It is important to make sure that our list is aligned with that of the United States so that

Canadian companies that manufacture these products are not at a disadvantage.

This was done in response to the recommendations of the Emerson report, and we will be consulting the public every step of the way.

* * *

[Translation]

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the decision by the Minister of Industry to allow Telus to buy Public Mobile stands in stark contrast to the throne speech.

In fact, now there is one less competitor in the cellphone market. This means fewer options for consumers and less incentive for businesses to offer better prices. Meanwhile, cellphone charges continue to rise. Thanks to the Conservatives, the big corporations are getting even bigger.

Given what happened today, how can the minister claim that his approach is working?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know that it is working when we look at the numbers.

The cost to consumers has dropped by about 20% across Canada thanks to our government's policies and efforts since 2008. My colleague specifically mentioned yesterday's announcement concerning Public Mobile and Telus, but she should really look at the facts to see what is happening on the ground in this sector.

I can certainly make sure that we continue talking about this and make a presentation on this matter so that she can better understand it.

• (1450)

[English]

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister cannot fool all of the people all of the time. Canadians know they are paying more for less, and the Conservatives have not done a thing about it. The fact is that we are seeing more spectrum concentration and less competition. It means Canadians will continue to be gouged for their cellphones.

Why did the minister not stand up for consumers and create the conditions for startups like Public Mobile to succeed? Why did he roll over instead of standing up for Canadian consumers?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Industry, CPC): It is really ridiculous, Mr. Speaker. Our government, through our policies on wireless, has indeed stood up for consumers. In fact, consumers today of wireless services are paying 18% less than they were spending in 2008 on their monthly bills. That is because of the actions our government has taken, providing more choice, allowing more foreign investment in the wireless sector, and because of our spectrum auction in 2008. Our spectrum auction in 2013 will yield even more results for the benefit of consumers—more choice, more diversity, greater competition, and better wireless services in every region of this country due to more competition.

*Oral Questions***ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS**

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government's first nations education proposal has received a failing grade from coast to coast to coast. First nations are rightly frustrated. The proposal ignores the fundamental problem of equitable funding. Instead, it imposes new requirements on them with no new resources.

Why does the minister still refuse to deal with the outright discrimination that exists when funding first nations students?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think I have been clear enough on this proposal. This is a proposal that was developed after months and months of consultation. This is a proposal that has been put out for discussion with first nations, stakeholders, provinces, and people who are interested in achieving the objective of having an education system that produces results.

This consultation has been going on now for over 10 months, and we have not yet received one single idea or proposal from the Liberals. If they have any ideas, they should pass them along. We need them.

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it has been 10 months of the minister not listening to the first nations. First nations are very clear that more bureaucracy, more paperwork, and more power to the minister is not the answer for two-thirds of students not completing high school.

When will the minister push “pause” on this failed top-down strategy, sit down with first nations, and build a workable, fully funded plan that respects, supports, and empowers first nations to have full control over their education systems?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in that regard, I invite the hon. member, her party, and any other members of the House if they have great ideas as to how we can achieve the objectives or can improve on this proposal. This is what consultation is all about. We have invited stakeholders, national chiefs, and tribal chiefs all across the country to look at the proposal and give us their ideas. No final decision has been made on this proposal, and that is what consultation is all about. I cannot think of why they would oppose that we consult.

* * *

[*Translation*]

HEALTH

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, while nickel dust was adversely affecting the people in my riding and compromising their health, the Conservatives were lining their pockets.

The directors of Arrimage Québec got out their cheque books to give thousands of dollars to the Conservatives, as did the members of the board of directors of the Port of Québec. In total, more than \$20,000 ended up in Conservative coffers.

Is the close contact between the Port of Québec directors and the Conservatives what is stopping the government from protecting the health of the people of Limoilou?

[*English*]

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is the responsibility of the Port of Quebec officials to balance the need to create jobs and have economic prosperity in the region with the needs of the community and protecting health and safety. I would expect that the Port of Quebec officials will listen to their local community on these concerns.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Transport could stand to listen to the people of Quebec City from time to time.

Let us review the facts. Toxic dust has been emitted at the Port of Québec on a number of occasions now. The federal government is twiddling its thumbs and doing nothing about it. The key players in all this are major Conservative Party donors. Is that a coincidence? I have my doubts.

The people at Arrimage Québec and the port directors are stuffing the Conservative Party coffers with thousands of dollars.

Will the Minister of Transport do the right thing, change course and take care of the people of Limoilou or have these big donations to the Conservative Party killed the government's common sense and empathy?

• (1455)

[*English*]

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said, the Quebec Port Authority has rules and regulations it must abide by. It is an arm's-length organization, and it is there to balance the needs of the community with the needs of the local marine community as well.

That being said, perhaps the member should consult with his longshoremen, whom he is very close with, to determine the fact that they have not refused work at all with respect to these matters.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon (Mississauga East—Cooksville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians expect their government to protect them from dangerous foreign criminals. Our Conservative government has done just that. We created the “wanted by the CBSA” list that removed 39 dangerous criminals from Canada.

Since coming to office, we have removed more than 115,000 illegal immigrants. Let us contrast that with the NDP leader, whose only trade policy is to import a cop-shooter, a dangerous criminal, Gary Freeman, to Canada. Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness update the House on this case?

Ms. Roxanne James (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a judge has ordered that this individual's application for a temporary resident permit be redetermined on a technicality, but let us be perfectly clear who we are talking about. He is a convicted cop-shooter and an alleged member of the extremist Blank Panther Party who hid in Canada illegally under a false name.

Oral Questions

Rather than stand up for the real victims of crime, the NDP leader has instead supported this violent criminal, going so far as to visit him on a trip to the United States.

Canadians would like to know whose side the NDP leader is on.

* * *

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when there was a coup d'état in Mali in the spring of 2012, many countries, including Canada, suspended their bilateral assistance programs.

Shortly after, when a provisional government was sworn in, only a few countries reinstated their programs. However, after this summer's presidential election and once President Ibrahim Boubarac Keïta was sworn in on September 5, the majority of countries reinstated their assistance programs. Canada did not.

Why?

[English]

Ms. Lois Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada is a leader in helping Malians through humanitarian crises. Our assistance provides emergency health care and access to water and food for displaced persons and refugees.

Canada will continue to work with other donors, Canadian non-governmental organizations, and multilateral organizations such as the World Food Programme to provide stability to the people of Mali. The ambassador of Mali to Canada called Canada's assistance "exemplary".

* * *

[Translation]

LABOUR

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is incredible: one-quarter of the Conservative omnibus budget bill directly attacks public service workers. I am sure we all agree that that is not a budget measure in and of itself.

The President of the Treasury Board sounded like a real amateur on the radio this morning. He could not even explain which jobs they are going to designate as essential services so that they can then withdraw their collective bargaining right.

Does the President of the Treasury Board know what he is talking about now? What jobs will be affected?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is utterly false. Changes to the essential services designation must be made before the negotiations so that they are applicable to the next round.

This bill establishes the intent of the Government of Canada to set public service salaries and benefits at a reasonable, responsible level consistent with the public interest.

● (1500)

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after years of inaction under the previous Liberal government and Liberals jet-setting around the world while carbon emissions increased by over 130 megatonnes, Canadians are happy to see a Conservative government get real results. Our record investments, both internationally and domestically, have made us a world leader, and we are proud of that.

Can the Minister of the Environment update this House on the latest trend report and the results it shows this government is getting?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of the Environment, Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and Minister for the Arctic Council, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government has taken action to address climate change. We introduced the world-leading coal power regulations and harmonized with the United States on vehicle emissions. We are getting results, unlike the Liberals, under whose watch carbon emissions increased by over 130 megatonnes.

We have reduced emissions. Projections show that emissions will go down close to 130 megatonnes from what they would have been in 2020. We will accomplish this without the NDP carbon tax, which would raise the price of everything.

* * *

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in 2008, Conservatives mistakenly deported Adel Benhmuda, his wife, and his four children to Libya, where Mr. Benhmuda was imprisoned and tortured. Only after the UN and the Federal Court intervened did the Conservatives allow the Benhmuda family to return to Canada. Their nightmare finally seemed to be over. However, now the department wants the Benhmuda family to pay the costs of their own deportation before they can return.

Will the minister reverse his decision?

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first I would like to congratulate our colleague on her appointment as critic for the immigration portfolio. I would also like to congratulate her on her marriage news from last summer.

Canada has an extremely generous immigration system. When people try to abuse that system with unjustified refugee claims, we will continue to remove them from Canada. I am very grateful to my colleague for bringing this case to our attention, as others have done. We will be looking at every possible option for waiving costs and fees and showing compassion in this extraordinary case.

ETHICS

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to return to the Mike Duffy affair. My question is for the Prime Minister. When did he and Mike Duffy first discuss the possibility of a Senate seat for Mr. Duffy?

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think the real issue here that Canadians are expecting us to talk about is the fact that on February 13 the Prime Minister was very clear to Senator Duffy that he repay any inappropriate expenses that he had incurred. That is the real issue that Canadians are talking about.

They are also talking about the need to reform the Senate. We need all parties in the House to come on board with us to reform the Senate, to bring accountability to the Senate, and more importantly, to bring an elected Senate with term limits. I hope the leader of the Green Party will assist us in that endeavour.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of His Excellency Luis Fernando Carrera Castro, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Guatemala.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I hesitate to raise the problem again of members making so much noise that we cannot hear other members, but in the last couple of days it has been unusual. The Minister of Foreign Affairs heckles so loudly that I cannot hear other members on his side of the House answering questions. A member of Privy Council should show more decorum in the House and set a good example.

The Speaker: I will continue to do my best to try to encourage all members to observe the rules of decorum during question period and I will pay particular attention in the next few days to the issue the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands has raised.

I suspect the hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley will be posing the Thursday question.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the baffling and insulting behaviour of the Conservative government when it comes to its anti-democratic tendencies knows no bounds.

Today we saw the spectacle of the government House leader move time allocation on a bill that the opposition had agreed to, and agreed to pass, and agreed to a debate that would happen within a number of days. That agreement achieved a “yes” in terms of the length of the

Business of the House

debate for the budget bill, a complicated bill of some 300 pages. Then, after that agreement was in place, the government then saw fit to move time allocation on an agreement, simply not taking yes for an answer.

The government House leader and his party seem to have grown addicted to Standing Order 78(3), the order that allows them to shut down debate, put a guillotine on Parliament, and not allow MPs to do their job on behalf of Canadians.

Will there be some point when the government will move legislation without moving time allocation right behind it?

● (1505)

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the opposition House leader for this opportunity to once again confirm the approach of the government when it comes to the use of section 78(3), which is time allocation.

The purpose of section 78(3) is to allow the facilitation of the scheduling of our business here in Parliament. The member has often said that it is designed to limit debate, but we have always said it is not designed for that purpose at all. Time allocation is designed to ensure adequate debate and to create certainty for members of Parliament so they will know when the debate will occur. It provides some certainty of when to expect a vote to occur, so that members can organize their affairs in that manner. It facilitates the business of the House so that there is adequate debate and decisions are made.

For that reason, he has said on a number of occasions now that the amount of time we have provided is as long as he wishes or longer than he wishes. That is because time allocation is not a device for eliminating debate but a device for scheduling the House in an orderly and productive manner. That has been our approach throughout, as it was today.

This afternoon, in that regard we will resume the second reading debate on Bill C-4, the economic action plan 2013 act. The bill was introduced on Tuesday on the heels of an impressive announcement from the Minister of Finance indicating that recent projections for the federal deficit show that the government is making strong progress, reducing that deficit by a further \$7 billion.

Bill C-4 would build upon this strong track record. It includes initiatives that will build a strong economy and create jobs, support job creators, close tax loopholes, combat international tax evasion, and respect taxpayers' dollars.

Over half a million job creators will benefit from our expansion of the hiring credit for small business that is in the bill.

We are also introducing new penalties and offences for criminal tax evasion, while closing tax loopholes.

As always, we continue to respect taxpayers' dollars with initiatives that will improve the efficiency of the temporary foreign workers program and modernize the Canada student loans program.

[*Translation*]

That debate will continue tomorrow, Monday and Tuesday.

Government Orders

On Wednesday, we will debate a bill to establish the Canadian Museum of History, which is listed on today's notice paper.

Next Thursday, we start debating Bill C-5, the Offshore Health and Safety Act, which was introduced this morning.

Finally, as hon. members will recall, the House unanimously—and kindly—agreed earlier this week that the House will not sit on Friday, November 1, to enable Conservative members to attend our policy convention in Calgary.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

ECONOMIC ACTION PLAN 2013 ACT NO. 2

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-4, A second act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 21, 2013 and other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to Bill C-4, a second act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 21, 2013 and other measures. It was interesting to hear the Conservative House leader talk about the planned deficit reduction and how the Conservatives were ahead by \$7 billion. A good question that would be welcomed at some point for the government to answer is exactly how much of that deficit reduction was as a result of money that did not flow to approved programs and services. We have certainly heard from communities that money they expected to see or proposals they had submitted had not been funded, despite the government announcements. Therefore, it would be good for the House to know that.

This bill is the second act to implement budget 2013. It is another budget implementation bill that is about 300 pages. This legislation amends or repeals 70 pieces of legislation. Some of what it tackles is: it strips health and safety officers of their powers and puts nearly all of these powers in the hands of the minister; it significantly weakens the ability of employees to refuse to work in unsafe conditions; it moves to eliminate binding arbitration as a method to resolve disputes in the public service; and it guts Canada's most venerable scientific research institution, the National Research Council.

I want to thank our House leader, the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley, for raising the fact that once again the government has limited debate. This is the fourth attempt by the Conservatives to evade scrutiny by parliamentarians and the public. In the past we had Bill C-38, Bill C-45 and Bill C-60. Canadians deserve an opportunity to hear a detailed, thorough, in-depth study of such wide-ranging pieces of legislation, yet we have the limiting of the ability of the House to scrutinize the legislation. Why should we care about that?

In the past we saw the government bring forward legislation that had errors in it. Because of the complexity of the legislation and the length of time we had to review it, the government had to bring forward subsequent legislation to correct that.

This legislation is fixing something that happened due to a technical mistake in Bill C-60, which would have doubled the taxation level of credit unions and caisses populaires. In September, tax experts discovered that the changes made in Bill C-60 would result in Quebec taxpayers being overburdened on dividends compared to taxpayers in other provinces.

Because I only have 10 minutes, I will focus on three particular aspects of the legislation.

First, the legislation would reduce the number of permanent members on the Veterans Review and Appeal Board.

Second, it would fix the mistakes with respect to the tax hike on credit unions.

Third, it would push ahead the Conservative plan on the \$350 million tax hike on labour sponsored venture capital funds.

With respect to veterans, Bill C-4 would reduce the number of permanent members on the Veterans Review and Appeal Board from 28 to 25. What is disappointing is that it was an opportunity for the Conservatives to bring forward separate legislation that looked to improve the Conservative record on veterans affairs. We know the NDP has not always been happy with the Veterans Review and Appeal Board, but simply changing numbers will not improve the situation.

In my riding of Nanaimo—Cowichan, the veterans office has closed and veterans are now forced to go further afield in order to get the services they require.

Just so Canadians understand a bit about the Veterans Review and Appeal Board, of the 76,446 Canadian Forces' clients of Veterans Affairs Canada, 1,400 are totally and permanently disabled and 406 of them will not receive a pension or allowance from the Canadian Forces.

The plan proposed by the ombudsman is based on an actuarial analysis to accurately determine for the first time how current benefits neglect certain veterans and will continue to neglect them unless changes are made quickly. Veterans Ombudsman Guy Parent has said that more than 400 of the most severely disabled veterans in Canada are not eligible for the Canadian Forces pension plan, while hundreds of other permanently disabled veterans could suffer the same fate and risk spending their retirement years at a lower standard of living than they had before the age of 65 due to sufficient income.

● (1510)

Certainly in my riding of Nanaimo—Cowichan we hear regularly from veterans and their families about their difficulties in accessing services, that they cannot get access to some services that they expected and that the money that is available simply does not respect and honour the service to our country that many veterans made.

I have spoken in the House previously about my father being a long-serving member of the Canadian Armed Forces and I am proud to say that I grew up on army bases from coast to coast.

Government Orders

I have a letter from a former member of the RCMP that talks about the assault on health care benefits for members of the armed forces and the RCMP. I will read a brief note from that because I think this is part of what the Veterans Appeal Board hears about the discrepancy and the difficulties in funding and whether a member is entitled to funding. The member said:

I have written...expressing my concern and profound disappointment with the fact that the government has arbitrarily decided to claw back so many necessary treatments after we risked our health and indeed our lives...I was assured that my health and the welfare of my family would be looked after. That sacred trust has been unabashedly broken.

While that in and of itself is repugnant, my greater fear is that once the members begin to see that their efforts in ensuring the safety of Canadians may actually result in huge costs to them, they will necessarily become more hesitant to engage in actions that risk their health and well being. This policy is short-sighted, unfair and contrary to Canadian values.

When we ask members of the armed forces or members of the RCMP to risk life and limb, we need to respect that when they come back to Canada or when they retire from the forces, they are treated in a fair and respectful manner. It would be incumbent upon the government to actually work with veterans and their families to ensure the services provided are adequate.

The second piece I will touch on is fixing the mistake on the credit unions' tax hike.

The bill introduces changes to fix a legislative error the Conservatives made by rushing the last omnibus budget bill through. Their mistake hiked taxes on credit unions to 28%, instead of the intended 15%.

I will read from the Credit Union Central of Manitoba remarks to a House of Commons standing committee on Bill C-60. The reason I quote from that previous presentation is because it highlights the importance of credit unions in our communities. In my riding of Nanaimo—Cowichan we have a couple of different credit unions and they are very important in all of our communities, but in particular, in some of our smaller communities. The Credit Union Central of Manitoba said:

Many credit union branches are in communities that other financial institutions vacated because they were not deemed profitable enough. Our business model, paired with fair tax policy like the additional deduction, has made it both possible and attractive for credit unions to grow in places where our competitors have retreated.

It goes on to say that the removal in Bill C-60 of the additional deductions of credit unions would simply compound the impact of regulatory demands by requiring credit unions to pay a higher portion of their net income in federal tax and further reduce their ability to build capital, invest in new technology and stay competitive.

This was a brief that was presented when Bill C-60 was in the House for a reading and because we had limited time to debate that, there was not enough attention paid to that and other presentations on the impact of Bill C-60, so now we are amending that mistake.

It concludes its presentation by saying:

I would argue that this tax deduction has proven to be good public policy. If it were to remain in place it would continue to be good public policy because it will help credit unions provide effective competition in the financial services sector and assist with the federal government's stated desire to increase competition in this sector. It would also represent good public policy by helping maintain strong financial services in as many communities as possible and contribute to the

sustainability of the many communities in rural Canada where credit unions are the only financial institution.

On the venture capital program, this has been a very successful program in British Columbia. There was an evaluation of the venture capital program and it indicated that not only did it contribute to job creation, but it also contributed to the fact that it helped grow companies which then went on to expand and become more successful companies.

● (1515)

Removing the supports for that program is unfortunate, particularly when the government continues to talk about the importance of job creation and supporting small business. Therefore, we would like to see the government reverse its decision on that.

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague is absolutely right. Over and over again, she showed the fact the government has continuously pushed through budget bills that have problems in them. Then the Conservatives have to turn around and try to fix them. Then we see government that continues down that road. Instead of learning from its mistakes and saying maybe we should have more discussion on these bills, the Conservatives actually shut down debate.

I have had numerous complaints about the processes and the cutbacks that are taking place. With Veterans Affairs, for example, now people are going to be handed some money as opposed to getting the services that they actually deserve and they will be given the money ahead of the time. That is problematic for these people because they need the money when they need the money, not too far ahead.

Maybe the member could talk about that and whether the bill is actually transparent as to the amount of money that would be put aside and especially removing the funding cap for first nations, whether that is in there. That is really important when we are looking at the first nations education bill.

● (1520)

Ms. Jean Crowder: Mr. Speaker, one of the points the member raised was the lack of transparency around how the bill was moving forward and the time limitations. A number of years ago we passed legislation that had to do with voter registration and voter ID. I know communities like the member's were impacted because of the fact that the bill had some mistakes in it and we subsequently had to pass new pieces of legislation to correct that legislation. The New Democrats at the time pointed out the challenges with that bill, but the Conservatives refused to listen to our amendments.

With regard to funding, the budget implement act contains absolutely no mention of the first nations education act. We saw a draft proposal that was released at eight o'clock on Tuesday night and that proposal talked about the fact that funding would come forward in regulation. We have no idea how that funding will be determined, what kind of criteria will be used, how first nations will be involved in developing that formula. When we talk about lack of transparency, that is just one more example of the lack of transparency of the government.

Government Orders

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the member has drawn our attention to changes in Bill C-4 that were necessitated by the rush in passing the previous budget implementation bill, the changes that were unintended that caused further tax damage to credit unions.

I am also aware of changes in this new bill, Bill C-4, that will be required because of mistakes made in treating income for fishermen by failing to properly deal with the income for fishermen versus highest weeks, versus their total take for the season.

It seems to me that we can make a very good case as members of the opposition that the Conservative Party mania for refusing amendments and for pushing bills through quickly is forcing Parliament over and over again to go back and pass new legislation months later to fix mistakes. Bill C-45 fixed mistakes that were in Bill C-38. Now Bill C-4 is fixing mistakes that were in Bill C-60.

Could my hon. friend give me any of her thoughts on the problems of holding up the House through passing bills too quickly?

Ms. Jean Crowder: Mr. Speaker, for the question of the week, we heard the House leader for the Conservatives say that the reason they imposed time allocation and limited debate was about scheduling. One would wonder about a government that thinks an efficient use of time is to introduce legislation, have it debated for a limited amount of time, refer it to committee, eventually it goes to the Senate, gets royal assent and then a couple of months later, it has to introduce another piece of legislation to fix legislation that had a mistake to begin with.

When we talk about efficient use of House time, having us go back to look at same legislation twice does not seem to be a good use of our time. If the Conservatives thinks that is a good use of their time, I suggest perhaps they might want to consider their future as good economic managers in our country.

Mr. Bob Dechert (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time today with the member for Sault Ste. Marie.

I am pleased to speak today in support of Bill C-4 regarding the implementation of budget 2013. Budget 2013 is full of good news and helpful measures for my community of Mississauga and, indeed, all Canadians.

I would like to take this opportunity to highlight some of the measures that are of great significance to my community, but before I do so, I believe it is important to note what is not in budget 2013. What is clearly missing from budget 2013 is new taxes. That is right; unlike Liberal budgets of the past and the dreams of the NDP, our government did not increase the tax burden on hard-working Canadians. In fact, our government has reduced the tax burden on working Canadians and job creators more than 150 times, reducing the overall tax burden to its lowest level in more than 50 years.

Our government is delivering more than \$60 billion in tax relief to job-creating businesses. The federal general corporate income tax rate was reduced from 21% to 15% and the corporate surtax that represented an additional 1.12% was eliminated for all corporations. The small business tax rate, which is so important to the thousands of small business owners and their employees in Mississauga, was

reduced from 12% to 11% and the amount of income eligible for this lower rate was increased to \$500,000.

In fact, our strong record of tax relief has meant annual savings for a typical family of four of over \$3,200. We have achieved this by cutting the lowest personal income tax rate to 15%; increasing the amount that Canadians can earn without paying tax; introducing pension income splitting for seniors; reducing the GST from 7% to 5% and putting an estimated \$1,000 back into the pockets of an average family; introducing and enhancing the working income tax benefit; introducing the tax-free savings account, which is the most important personal savings vehicle since the RRSP; and increasing the age credit and the pension income credit. Overall, we have removed over one million low-income Canadians from the tax rolls.

As a lawyer engaged in advising businesses, I unfortunately witnessed thousands of jobs leave Canada during the 1990s and early 2000s due to very high personal and business tax rates compared to those in most other industrialized nations. For years, businesses chose to create jobs elsewhere and individual entrepreneurs and people with high technology skills chose to live in the United States because the unreasonably high tax rates in Canada made it difficult for them to operate a viable business.

Today, the combined federal and provincial corporate tax rates in Canada compare very favourably with those in jurisdictions such as the states of New York, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Ohio, Illinois and California, places that we compete with every day for the creation of jobs. This is particularly the reason why our national unemployment rate is below that of the United States for the first time in 30 years and our job-creation record is the best in the G7. With our enviable fiscal situation, having the lowest net debt to GDP ratio in the G7, we are in a very good position to keep our taxes at low and reasonable levels while our counterparts in the United States and Europe will be forced to raise their taxes to reduce their deficits and debts.

When I first ran for office, people in my community said they did not believe that any politician would actually lower taxes. Our government, led by the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance, did exactly that, and they began reducing taxes immediately upon forming government in 2006. The Mississauga Board of Trade has told me it believes that our government's tax policies have helped its members' businesses survive the recession, recover, expand and hire new employees. These are some of the most important reasons that our economy is doing much better than our competitors in the United States and Europe and that *Forbes* magazine has declared that Canada is the best place in the world in which to do business. I am confident that our government's tax policies will help to ensure a bright economic future for all Canadians.

Government Orders

In addition to the good news about taxes, the Minister of Finance indicated in his budget speech that Canada remains on track to balance the budget in 2015-16. This is very good news indeed. In addition to holding the line on government growth, budget 2013 includes more savings in government spending, totalling \$2 billion by 2015-16 through numerous common sense improvements, including 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.

• (1525)

As I mentioned earlier, Canada is leading the G7 in net debt to GDP ratio, and at the recent G20 conference in Russia, the Prime Minister showed real international leadership in committing to further reduce Canada's net debt to GDP ratio to 25% and encouraged other G20 nations to follow Canada's lead and make the same government spending reductions necessary to reduce their debt ratios as well.

In today's very competitive global marketplace, it is important that our manufacturers continually upgrade their productive machinery and equipment to make use of the most efficient and up-to-date technology. Utilizing the latest processes improves the quality and marketability of their products, reduces their costs of production and makes them more energy efficient.

Our government understands these realities of modern business. That is why I was very pleased to see that in budget 2013, our government is providing an additional \$1.4 billion in tax relief to job creators through a two-year extension of the temporary accelerated capital cost allowance for new machinery and equipment.

This is very good news, especially in light of the Prime Minister's announcement of the comprehensive economic and trade agreement between Canada and the European Union. Our manufacturers now have very good reason to want to invest in new plants and machinery as they ramp up to take full advantage of the unprecedented access to the more than 500 million European consumers that the CETA agreement will provide to Canadian producers.

The extension of the accelerated capital cost allowance could not have come at a better time. Our government understands that small businesses are the backbone of our economy. More Canadians are employed in small businesses of less than 10 employees than in any other size of business.

Many of my neighbours in Mississauga are new Canadians. They have come to Canada from every nation in the world with skills, drive and ambition, strong work ethics and a determination to succeed. However, most new Canadians do not find work in the ranks of large industrial corporations. More often than not, they start their own small businesses and create work for other Canadians.

That is why I am happy to note that budget 2013 will extend and expand the temporary hiring credit for small businesses. An estimated 560,000 employers will benefit from this measure, and it is expected to save small businesses about \$225 million in 2013.

I have been told by many small business owners that this has helped them to expand, and with the signing of the CETA agreement,

these entrepreneurs will be able to meet the new opportunities created by opening European markets to our goods and services.

Investments in public infrastructure create jobs, drive economic growth and provide a high quality of life for families in Mississauga and every community across Canada. Mississauga and Peel region have benefited greatly from investments made by our government since 2006 in transit, roads, water treatment, a new celebration square, improvements to community centres, libraries and pools, a new instructional centre for University of Toronto Mississauga and a new Mississauga campus of Sheridan College, among dozens of other projects.

Mississauga and other municipalities have been asking for long-term predictable infrastructure funding. Budget 2013 delivers this certainty for the next 10 years by providing more than \$53 billion in predictable infrastructure funding.

This represents the largest and longest federal investment in job-creating infrastructure in Canadian history, including a community improvement fund of \$32.2 billion through gas tax fund payments and the GST rebate for municipalities to support community infrastructure projects that will improve the quality of life of Canadian families; a new building Canada fund of \$14 billion to support major economic infrastructure projects; a renewed P3 Canada fund of \$1.25 billion to build infrastructure projects faster through public private partnerships; and over \$10 billion in investments in federal public infrastructure.

Canadians know that our Conservative government believes in keeping families strong. Budget 2013 contains several key measures to help Canadian families, including enhancing the adoption expense tax credit to better recognize the unique costs associated with adopting a child, and supporting palliative care services.

Canadian businesses succeed globally and are well poised to take advantage of the new opportunities created by unfettered access to the European market by continually innovating and commercializing new products and technologies. Our government is supporting them by improving support for Canada's aerospace industry by investing almost \$1 billion in the strategic aerospace and defence initiative, which will benefit important Mississauga employers such as Pratt and Whitney Canada and Honeywell.

All of these measures and more will ensure the future economic prosperity and security and quality of life for the people of Mississauga and all Canadians. For these reasons, I am pleased to support Bill C-4 and encourage all hon. members to do likewise.

Government Orders

● (1530)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Mississauga—Erindale for his speech. Unfortunately, however, he still believes in magical thinking.

The member is contradicted by the senior deputy governor of the Bank of Canada. In a recent speech to the Economic Club of Canada in Toronto, Tiff Macklem clearly stated that Canada's exports have fallen dramatically. In fact, they remain \$35 billion below their pre-recession peak and more than \$130 billion below where they would be in an average export recovery.

In fact, the observation that the senior deputy governor of the Bank of Canada made was that many Canadian exporters have gone bankrupt or have turned to the domestic market.

I would like to know how my government colleague can deliberately turn a blind eye to such a dire situation.

● (1535)

[*English*]

Mr. Bob Dechert: Mr. Speaker, I think my hon. friend is forgetting that Canadians export not only products but services as well. In fact, the Canadian service sector is very large and growing every day. The good news about the Canada-European Union trade agreement is that it also includes free trade for services.

When we take that into account, we will find that Canada is doing very well indeed. That is why Canada has created over one million net new jobs since the bottom of the recession. That is why it is leading the G7 in job creation. That is why the economic future of Canadians is very bright indeed.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is fairly well established that one of the greatest expenditures a province has is in the whole area of health care. One of the greatest voids or vacuums that is out there is any form of leadership on the health care file coming from the Prime Minister and the Conservative government.

In fact, we all know the health care accord expires in 2014, yet there has been zero effort from the Prime Minister and the government in trying to address the need to replace the health care accord.

This issue is very important to every Canadian. No matter where they live in Canada, Canadians are concerned about the future of health care. They want to know that health care is going to be there for them and their family members.

When we take a look at budget implementation or the priorities of government in dealing with the budget, we wonder why the government has not taken the opportunity to be very clear and make a solid commitment in the form of renegotiating a health care accord that would take us into the next decade.

Mr. Bob Dechert: Mr. Speaker, of course health care is very important to every Canadian, but I find this a bit rich coming from a member of the Liberal Party, which cut \$25 billion out of health care transfers to Canadian provinces and put the health care system in Ontario at great risk. I can speak from personal experience on this.

I find it bizarre that he is asking me about our government's spending on health care when our government has, first of all, restored the \$25 billion that the Liberals took away from health care transfers. We increased the health care transfers for 6% every single year and we continue to do so. Those negotiations are ongoing.

No government has ever spent more on health care funding than this government.

Mrs. Stella Ambler (Mississauga South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague from Mississauga—Erindale for his speech and, in particular, for mentioning the improvements that our city, Mississauga, has seen through various economic action plans over the years. He has been in the House longer than I have, so I think he knows a bit more about the history, but I do see every day, when travelling through my riding and the hon. member's riding next to mine, that there have been many benefits to Mississauga.

Could the member perhaps give us a few more details about some of the infrastructure projects and some of the improvements that the economic action plans over the years have given to Mississauga?

Mr. Bob Dechert: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her great question. She is doing a wonderful job representing the people of Mississauga South. Of course she knows, as I do, that Mississauga has received funding from the federal government for approximately 250 projects across the city, which is completely unprecedented in Canadian history. Never has the City of Mississauga received more funding from the federal government. In fact, the former Liberal member of Parliament for the riding that I represent said that in the 13 years she was a member of Parliament, the federal government invested a total of maybe \$15 million in one project in the City of Mississauga.

Unfortunately, I do not have a lot of time to go further, but I know that my colleague knows of many of these projects. Everywhere we go in Mississauga, we will see improvements that the federal government has invested in there.

● (1540)

Mr. Bryan Hayes (Sault Ste. Marie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to add my comments to today's debate on Bill C-4, a piece of legislation that would create jobs and economic growth in communities across our country, including my riding of Sault Ste. Marie. Indeed, today's legislation is part of our government's plan to create jobs and economic growth and to secure Canada's long-term prosperity for years to come.

As a matter of fact, since 2006, our government has been taking concrete action to ensure that Canada's economy remains strong. Unlike the high-tax New Democrats and Liberals, our Conservative government believes in keeping taxes low and leaving more money where it belongs: in the pockets of hard-working Canadian families and job-creating businesses. That is why since 2006 we have cut taxes over 160 times, reducing the overall tax burden to its lowest level in 50 years. Overall, our strong record of tax relief has helped remove over one million low-income Canadians from the tax rolls. That is not all. It has also meant savings for a typical Canadian family in 2013 totalling over \$3,200.

How did we accomplish this? The answer is simple. We have cut taxes in every way government collects them: personal taxes, consumption taxes, business taxes, excise taxes, and more. This includes cutting the lowest personal income tax rate to 15%; increasing the amount Canadians can earn without paying tax; introducing pension income splitting for seniors; reducing the GST from 7% to 5%, putting an estimated \$1,000 back in the pockets of an average family; introducing the tax-free savings account, the most important personal savings vehicle since RRSPs; reducing the small-business tax rate from 12% to 11%; eliminating consumer tariffs on babies' clothes, sporting goods and exercise equipment. The list goes on.

It is measures such as these, which leave more money in the pockets of Canadians, that have helped Canada to emerge from the recession in one of the strongest positions among the developed world. In fact, since the depth of the recession, over one million net new jobs have been created, with most in high-wage industries. This is by far the strongest job creation record in the entire G7. Indeed, Canada's unemployment rate is at its lowest level since December 2008 and remains below that of the U.S., a phenomenon that has not been seen in nearly three decades. Contrary to what the opposition leaders may believe, Canada is on strong economic footing.

However, we are not the only ones who think so. Let us see what others are saying. Moody's report on Canada for 2013 states that thanks to its diversity and solid fundamentals, Canada's economy has weathered the post-global financial crisis period better than most of its peers.

According to Fitch Ratings:

Canada has a good track record of prudent fiscal management. Its fiscal credibility was boosted by the timely withdrawal of the fiscal stimulus implemented during the global financial crisis and the roadmap provided...to achieve a balanced federal government fiscal position by 2015/16. ...the consolidation path is realistic.

With reviews like these, it is no wonder Canada is one of the few countries in the world to boast a AAA credit rating from the three major credit rating agencies.

Let us talk a bit about support for job creators. Despite Canada's economic success, we cannot become complacent, and our government understands that. We have repeatedly said that Canada's economy is not immune to economic challenges beyond our borders. We have been and will continue to be impacted by the ongoing turbulence in the U.S. and Europe, among our most important trading partners. That is why the Canada–EU trade agreement is so significant. It will bring an additional \$12 billion annually to the Canadian economy, creating 80,000 new jobs and opening up a market of 500 million consumers and a \$17-trillion economy.

● (1545)

That is also why economic action plan 2013 focuses on positive initiatives to support job creation and economic growth while returning to balanced budgets, ensuring Canada's economic advantage remains strong today and into the future.

Today's legislation contains a number of measures to support job creation and economic growth. This includes extending and expanding the job hiring credit for small business, which would benefit an estimated 560,000 employers and provide an estimated \$225 million in tax relief in 2013. Bill C-4 would also increase and

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index the lifetime capital gains exemption. This positive measure would increase the rewards of investing in small business by making it easier for owners to transfer their family business to the next generation of Canadians. Today's legislation would also expand the accelerated capital cost allowance to further encourage investments in clean energy generation.

That is not all. Our government is continuing to build on our sound economic position by freezing EI premium rates for the next three years. This action alone would leave \$660 million in the pockets of job creators and workers in 2014 alone.

Despite what the opposition may have us believe, this tax relief would help support Canada's continued economic recovery and sustained, business-led, long-term growth. However, do not take my word for it. Let us hear what others have to say. Diane J. Brisebois, president and CEO of the Retail Council of Canada agrees. She says, "This freeze on premiums will mean more money for employers to invest in other important areas such as employment, training and infrastructure."

Dan Kelly, president of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, said the "announcement of an EI rate freeze is fantastic news for Canada's entrepreneurs. This move will keep hundreds of millions of dollars in the pockets of employers and employees which can only be a positive for the Canadian economy."

There is more. Joyce Reynolds, the Canadian Restaurant and Foodservices Association's executive-vice president of government affairs notes:

Payroll costs have a significant impact on overall labour costs. They are a barrier to hiring, particularly for inexperienced workers.... We are pleased the government is demonstrating commitment to youth...by holding the line on these profit-insensitive costs.

Unlike the opposition, our government understands that tax relief is important to Canadian families. I encourage the members opposite to vote in favour of this important measure, which would leave more money in the hands of Canadians.

Canada is leading the world in job creation, with more than one million net new jobs created since the depth of the recession. However, there is work yet to be done. That is why implementing Canada's economic action plan is so important. It is for that reason that I urge all members of the House, and especially the members opposite, to support these job creating measures.

Although, who are we kidding, we all know the opposition will be voting against these measures as they have time and time again. The only thing the NDP seems to support are risky spending schemes and forcing a \$20 billion carbon tax on Canadian consumers and job creators. That is more than I can say for the Liberals, who unbelievably do not even have a plan for the economy. They have announced the plan will be released during election mode in 2015. That is unheard of.

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It is clear, and Canadians know this, that when it comes to the economy, our Conservative government continues to be the right choice.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, now that the member has very obediently recited his talking points on this issue, I note that he was very interested in quoting people in support of his statements. I have a quote for him, and I would like him to comment on it. It comes from Michel Leblanc, who is president and CEO of the Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal. He is referring to labour-sponsored funds, for which, as we know, the tax credit for investors will be gradually eliminated, falling from 15% to 0%.

Mr. Leblanc's remarks are as follows:

Labour-sponsored funds are a key part [of our financial ecosystem]. They have invested more during hard economic times. They have helped Quebec perform better. Quebec businesses did not suffer the credit crunch [in 2008 and 2009], as was the case elsewhere.

It clearly states here that abolishing the tax credit could result in the elimination of 20,000 jobs in Quebec and that more than 110,000 jobs have been created so far and are being maintained by the FTQ's Fonds de solidarité.

I would like to know how the member for Sault Ste. Marie can justify this measure, which will destroy jobs in Quebec.

• (1550)

[*English*]

Mr. Bryan Hayes: Mr. Speaker, the reality is that there have been over one million net new jobs since we formed government, since the depth of the recession. That is what is important to Canadians.

We are going to create even more new jobs with the Canada-European Union trade agreement. As a matter of fact, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce said, “with the global economy continuing to struggle, such initiatives are more important than ever”. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business applauds the federal government. The Canadian Council of Chief Executives said, “For Canadian consumers, companies and workers, the overall impact [will be] positive”. The Forest Products Association of Canada said, “We welcome this trade deal and appreciate the government’s...push in the area of freer trade”.

This government is working toward jobs. It is positively happening and will continue to happen.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments the member is making. One of the biggest concerns Canadians have is with the whole process we are expected to follow with the Conservative majority government mentality, which uses budget implementation bills to corral other legislative initiatives, pack them in and then apply time allocation, thereby preventing due diligence and an adequate amount of debate on a wide variety of bills. In fact, when he was in opposition, the Prime Minister was very upset when the Liberals introduced an omnibus bill that had 100 pages to it. The current bill is 400 pages. In the last session another was 500 pages. We had one that was 800 pages. They are huge bills.

With regard to his thoughts on providing due diligence, how does he justify putting time allocation on a bill that would change so much in terms of legislation? It is not just the budget we are talking about but many other pieces of legislation. How does he justify that to Canadians?

Mr. Bryan Hayes: Mr. Speaker, at that time I actually was not in opposition. I am a new member of Parliament but that is okay, I am happy to be here now.

With respect to this particular budget—

Mr. Robert Sopuck: We're happy to have you.

Mr. Bryan Hayes: Thank you, I'm happy to be here.

Every Canadian had access to pre-budget consultations. In my riding, I held budget consultations. I stood in front of city council and had budget consultations with council members. I gave them the opportunity to speak and listened to their concerns. That is what is incorporated in the budget implementation bill, the concerns of my constituents and constituents across Canada.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Wetaskiwin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my good friend for his thoughtful words. I am reminded by not only his speech but the speech from the previous speaker, the parliamentary secretary, of a good friend of mine that I went to university with, Dr. Brent Weinhandl, a dentist in the city of Wetaskiwin. After the election in, I believe, 2000, when the Liberals somehow won and had no right by our standards to do so, I said to him, “That's it, I'm moving out of here. I can't stand these high taxes. I have the skills necessary and I'm going to move to the States”. I cooled off a little, but the next day I phoned him up and he had already made the move to sell his business and move to the States to avoid the taxes and the gross misconduct of the previous government.

I want the member to talk about the value of the low taxes that we have across the board and also what was in the throne speech about capping spending and legislating mandatory balanced budgets.

• (1555)

Mr. Bryan Hayes: Mr. Speaker, that was a great question. As a former small-business owner in my riding of Sault Ste. Marie, I cannot say enough about low taxes. They are so necessary.

For major corporate employers in Sault Ste. Marie, such as Essar Algoma Steel, Tenaris Algoma Tubes, G-P Flakeboard, it is absolutely imperative that the corporate tax rate stays where it is. This is a globally competitive economy. We need to compete and we have a government that understands that.

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Labrador, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to stand in the House to speak to the debate that is ongoing here and to talk about my riding and the economy in that part of our country.

First of all, I want to thank the people of Labrador for electing me as their member of Parliament and for allowing me the great privilege of representing them in the House of Commons of Canada. I also want to acknowledge and thank my colleagues within the Liberal Party and our leader of the Liberal Party for having such a dynamic vision for Canada, for being part of a team that is out there promoting the Liberal values and morals that are the foundation of our country.

I live in a very beautiful and vast region of this country. Even to this day, very few people know of its beauty and the value of its place in our country. It is known as “the land God gave to Cain”, which was coined by an explorer, Jacques Cartier, in 1534. It is a land known for its rugged beauty and distinct culture and as the resource energy house of the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. It is a vast landscape that has spiritual beliefs steeped very deep within its roots, and these roots are far-reaching and wide.

Let me give that statement a bit of context as I tell members about Labrador. Labrador's land mass is roughly 300,000 square kilometres. To look at it another way, we could fit the entire provinces of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and the island of Newfoundland within Labrador's borders. This is a good reason so many people call Labrador “the big land”. I do not have to tell my colleagues what it is like trying to travel through my riding when I have to cover that kind of distance over so many different communities, some that are completely isolated, others that are connected by road.

For thousands of years, the indigenous people, including the Innu and the Inuit, harvested the land and the sea for the sustenance and longevity of their communities without much involvement or interference from anyone, including governments. However, as time passed, and through the late 1700s and early 1800s, trading with European companies increased. We have heard a lot of talk about trade with Europe in recent days.

Even back in the 1800s, trading with European companies was starting to increase. More and more, the English and the French began to settle in Labrador, as well as missionaries, including the Church of England, the Methodists, the Moravians, and the Roman Catholics. All of those faiths shared a belief with the indigenous people. To this day, the Moravian and the Roman Catholic churches remain an important piece of modern-day aboriginal culture in many parts of my riding.

Labrador's history is indeed rich and indeed has been very challenging over the years. Labrador was under Quebec jurisdiction between 1774 and 1809, when it was returned to Newfoundland. Quebec disputed the decision until 1927, which is actually just less 100 years ago. It was the British Privy Council at that time that defined the western boundary of Labrador and deemed Labrador to be under the jurisdiction of Newfoundland. There was no vote. There was no referendum. In fact, at no time in our history did anyone ever ask the people of Labrador what they wanted.

That is how the evolution of the great riding I represent came to be today. The political drama of who was to own Labrador did not end there, however. In 1932, the then bankrupt Dominion of Newfoundland was embroiled in a political vote and scandal that saw the resignation of its prime minister, Sir Richard Squires, and the attempted sale of Labrador back to Canada. The deal to sell the big land fell through, and once again, without any input from Labradorians, Labrador was given back to Newfoundland.

● (1600)

As part of the youngest province in our great country, our history's future began to speed up with the onset of World War II. The Canadian Forces base in Goose Bay, now forever known as 5 Wing Goose Bay, was built in 1941. It was used by the United States and

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Canada during the war that saw thousands of military personnel change the landscape and identity of Labrador forever.

Central Labrador is now the hub of that region. It is where south meets north and west connects east. Labrador is home to roughly 30,000 people, with approximately two-thirds of them living in western and central Labrador. Western Labrador is where some of the largest and richest iron ore deposits in our country are. In fact, it has some of the largest deposits of iron ore in North America.

The natural resources available in Labrador have caught the world by storm. At no other time in history has there been so much international attention and interest in the region, from iron ore to nickel to hydro-electric power, not to mention the natural gas and oil that is being discovered off the Labrador coast. All of this development and exploration has had many effects on Labrador and on Labradorians, some of them positive and some of them negative.

What this progression has done for our province on the world stage is have a direct and undeniable effect not only in world markets but on the future of our aboriginal people.

Labrador is home to three distinct aboriginal cultures. This adds to the colourful tapestry of our history and our lineage. As I alluded to earlier, for thousands of years, the Inuit and Innu travelled throughout Labrador, hunting and fishing and later trading with Europe.

Today the indigenous people have made many positive strides in self-governance and preservation and promotion of their own culture. In 2005, the Labrador Inuit Association, the political advocacy group that represents the Inuit in Labrador transitioned to self-government with the formation of the Nunatsiavut government.

Now under the leadership of their president, Sarah Leo, the Nunatsiavut government has direct control over Labrador Inuit lands and has regional governance over five communities in northern Labrador. In fact, the impact of the Inuit in Labrador is far-reaching. In southern Labrador, there is evidence of Inuit settlements and documentation of English and French traders working with and engaging in social activities with the Inuit people.

Today, the NunatuKavut community council, which is led by former member of Parliament, Todd Russell, represents some 6,000 southern Labrador Inuit and continues to press the provincial and federal governments for their own land claims, self-government, and recognition. I will push for them, as well, under Canada's aboriginal self-governance model, because they deserve to be represented as part of the aboriginal Inuit population of Labrador.

We reference Canada as a multicultural country. Labrador being one of the most unique regions of this nation could be considered a multicultural body in its own right. Like the Inuit and Innu of Labrador, we have a deep spiritual and strong practical connection to the land and to the sea. The Innu first nations people, numbering over 2,200, are formally represented by the Innu Nation. They live mainly in two communities in Labrador: Sheshatshiu in central Labrador and Natuashish in the north coast of Labrador.

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Since the formation of the Innu Nation, the Innu people have benefited greatly from many natural resource developments in the region, and like the NunatuKavut, the Innu Nation has land claim agreements and impact benefit agreements with both the provincial and federal governments.

●(1605)

The aboriginal peoples, along with the white settlers, who date back nearly 400 years in that area, and the Basque whalers who came from Spain over 1,500 years ago, are the people who chose Labrador as their home. They have all gifted us with their knowledge and colourful history and have shown Labrador respect, demanding only the best from those who govern and real attention from those who choose to be the decision-makers in their land.

This last year, Red Bay, which was the home of the early Basque settlers who came from the old country, was designated a world UNESCO district. I want to congratulate all those involved in making this happen for the community of Red Bay. It puts Labrador on the map of the world so that many people may learn who we really are, not just as Labradorians and Newfoundlanders but as Canadians.

Labrador is also home to Torngat Mountains National Park, which lies in the sacred lands of the Inuit and borders Ungava Bay in the north. I have had the opportunity to hike and camp in the Torngat Mountains. I have witnessed the melting of the glaciers and have seen first-hand the impact of modern-day industry on our environment. Those who defy that such things are happening are living in a land that will continue to suffer because of their attitude.

In my treks through the Torngat Mountains, I have had the opportunity to learn the trails of the early Inuit who crossed over from Labrador to Quebec, and yes, I have been to the highest peak in Labrador. The view from there is breathtaking, as it is from all across our country.

Today we are focused on two other famous Canadian landmarks that lie in the heart of my riding of Labrador: the Mealy Mountain national park, which is currently in the planning and implementation phases at Parks Canada; and Battle Harbour, the 17th century fishing village that represents our fishing industry and trade with Portugal, Spain, and France as well as the link for the Newfoundland floater fishery for more than 200 years.

Battle Harbour is currently designated a national historic site, yet it is run by a non-profit board that finds it difficult to continue without core funding. This historic piece of Canada is at risk without the financial support and recognition of Heritage Canada and the Canadian government.

We are a country that takes pride in who we are and in our history. Therefore, we should always make way to ensure that it is preserved and continues to tell the story of a great nation.

As rural Canadians and distinct aboriginal cultures, our challenges as a society are compounded. We have some of the largest developments and exports of minerals, such as iron ore, nickel, and copper, and the largest energy development project in history, on the Churchill River, with another development ongoing that will add 850 megawatts of clean energy to Canada's energy warehouse. We

have a fishery with export and harvesting partnerships that we share with the Arctic and other foreign jurisdictions.

We have a tiny population of 30,000 people over 300,000 square miles, but we employ at least 3,000 or more people, other Canadians who fly in and out of Labrador, on a daily basis. We are very proud of our industrial record and of what we are able to contribute to this country from such a small group of people in a corner of rural Canada.

We are Labrador's resources. We are the second largest contributor to the GDP of Newfoundland and Labrador, next to oil and gas, but we lag far behind the rest of the province and country in infrastructure. I ask you why. How could a land of such abundance be lacking in so many ways?

●(1610)

In the 21st century, Labrador is only now being connected by highway. While the northern portion is not yet built and the southern portion is bad, gravel-top road, the Canadian government today that governs this country has not seen its way to designate the Trans-Labrador Highway as part of our Trans-Canada Highway system. This in itself shows the real disregard for our people who live in a rural and northern society of our country.

We are one of the most industrialized regions, contributing millions in tax dollars to the country. We have the largest exports of iron ore of anywhere in North America, yet we do not have cellphone coverage in most of our communities. We do not have broadband or even Internet access. Companies say that this is an investment for governments, for there is no return for them as a private company to build the infrastructure in these northern areas.

The government opposite talks about a break on roaming fees, which is all good, but what about those who have no place to roam in the digital age? What about all of those communities in the rural and northern areas that cannot connect? As Canadians, if we cannot connect, we cannot be full players in the 21st century in this country.

Earlier in my speech, I talked about 5 Wing Goose Bay, the Canadian military base in Labrador whose assets and geographic position make it the primary location for search and rescue and training for the north, including the Arctic regions. This base, 5 Wing Goose Bay, is a valuable Canadian asset that, if mandated appropriately, could be one of the major response bases for training the military and our Canadian Rangers and for search and rescue operations. It could be the staging area to launch our jurisdictional claims to sovereignty in the Arctic. I am asking the government opposite to stop using this military base as election bait and start using it to create real opportunities for the Canadians in this country.

The government opposite has been clouding 5 Wing Goose Bay with false promises, promising the moon but delivering darkness. Show people real respect, I say to the government opposite. Follow through on commitments. Start investing and measuring up to the expectations that it has left with people. They are people who work hard on the ground in the country every day.

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I will not relent on this issue because I know the potential is there. If only the naysayers within government would remove their blinders and see the real opportunity that comes with a gift such as 5 Wing Goose Bay.

I could go on extensively on many of these issues. As the House knows, I have spent my life in Labrador. I am the proud daughter of a fisherman and of a mother who crafts from seal skin in a very elegant way. I am the granddaughter of an Inuit woman, and I know the significance of being in a culture that is dependent on the land and the sea for survival. I represent people who are strong supporters of this country and who have contributed so much in building the country we know today. We are northerners. We are rural people. We deserve the same benefits in this country as all other people.

I will work hard to ensure that the economy of these regions is recognized by the government opposite and ensure that these people get the investments they so deserve.

• (1615)

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Wetaskiwin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague for her speech. I am guessing this is her maiden speech in the House, so I congratulate her on that.

I wish her all the best of luck in convincing the rest of her Liberal colleagues and former Liberal senator Mac Harb on the value of the seal hunt. I wish her well with that. We are pretty solid on this side of the House insofar as supporting rural economies and ensuring we respect those traditions.

The member for Kings—Hants cannot contain himself, so I will ask a question for the member about the member for Kings—Hants, who might be a bit worried about his position as the finance critic, given the great comments from his party's candidate in Toronto Centre if she should ever get elected. This is Chrystia Freeland speaking in the presence of a leader of the Liberal Party, the member for Kings—Hants. Here is what she had to say on jobs:

It is increasingly the case that your job prospects are correlated not with how hard you work, not with how well you did at school, but with the job that your father had.

I find those comments a bit ironic and, frankly, moronic. I just wonder if the new member for the Liberal Party would agree with that sound economic policy from the Liberals' star candidate.

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Mr. Speaker, first I am going to say that we take the equality of opportunity very seriously on this side of the House. My colleague, the member for Kings—Hants, has been one of the few people who have stood up in this Parliament on a regular basis talking about what is happening clearly with young Canadians and how they have borne the brunt of the recession that we have experienced in this country. He has talked about the youth unemployment rate. He has talked about the need to reach out and extend more resources to young people all across the country. He has done a marvellous job, and we commend him for that.

On the seal hunt, I want to say this, and I want to ensure it is noted on the record. My father went to the ice. My brothers still go to the ice to hunt seal. My mother has sewn sealskin until her fingers have been sore. To this day she makes a living from making this product. I cannot determine what the views of individual members of Parliament are in this House of Commons or in the Senate. I cannot determine how other Canadians will reflect upon this industry.

However, I will tell members that it is a part of who I am, and it is a part I am proud to say I belong to. We continue to promote this industry, we continue to hunt, we continue to use the product and we do so in a very humane way. It is a part of who we are, and we make no apologies for that.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I too would like to congratulate the member for Labrador on her speech. I have a history with the hon. member. In fact, she and I visited southern Labrador many years ago when we were both in the Newfoundland and Labrador legislature. She sat as an independent at that time, and I do not think I need to tell hon. members here today that she will be as feisty a member in this House as she was in the Newfoundland and Labrador legislature for 16 years. I congratulate her on her maiden speech, that being the conventional name for this, although it is probably a little inappropriate given the member's political experience.

I was in southern Labrador recently during a provincial byelection, and I can agree with the hon. member about the road conditions and about the lack of cellphone coverage. Never mind roaming fees or fees of any kind, residents of southern Labrador, and other parts of Labrador as well, just cannot communicate in a modern way, and I know these improvements have to be made and I know the member will continue to fight for them.

I want to talk about search and rescue in Goose Bay in particular. We all know about the tragedy of last year. Is the hon. member aware that the search and rescue mandate of the squadron in Goose Bay was in fact downgraded? Instead of having, as it had before, a secondary SAR responsibility, when the report came out after the tragedy of last year, the military spokesperson said it had no role in search and rescue other than any other military aircraft anywhere. Is the member aware that this downgrade has taken place? What is she prepared to do to help fight to restore that?

• (1620)

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is absolutely right. My first election in politics was as an independent member in the Newfoundland and Labrador legislature in 1996, and he was at that time the leader of the New Democratic Party in Newfoundland and Labrador, and we actually shared a wing of offices. We got to discuss many issues back in those days.

I am aware of what has been happening with regard to the search and rescue operations in Labrador. It is really unfortunate that it took the loss of life of a 14-year-old Inuit boy from the small town of Makkovik, for people to start looking at where search and rescue is in this country and how we have not been able to fulfill the expectation or even meet the basic safety requirements to ensure people that comfort in many parts of the country, especially in northern regions of the country.

When that happened, people in Labrador, in Newfoundland, all over the country and in this legislature asked the government opposite to do an inquiry into the death of Burton Winters to see what went wrong. Where did the protocols go wrong? Why was the response system of search and rescue not adequate to respond at that time? Where do we need to make improvements?

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We never did get the inquiry. We never did get the investigation. Instead, a government minister, who is no longer in this legislature, flew into Labrador and made an announcement that a third helicopter would be added to provide those services in Labrador. We found out a few months later that at the base in Goose Bay there was no longer a requirement to respond to those search and rescue calls. What was the point of adding the helicopter?

If there is a supplementary question, I will explain the rest of the answer in more detail.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I ask if the member would continue on in her response. This is a supplementary question to her to finish her answer.

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Mr. Speaker, it is important to note that when the announcement was made that there would be a third helicopter added at 5 Wing Goose Bay and that this would be seen as an improvement to responding to search and rescue operations, we learned two things: one was that protocols got changed and there was no longer a requirement to respond, but we also learned that when the next tragic event occurred, the helicopters were not available. They were down for maintenance, or were unable to be used or had been sent out. There was every reason why these helicopters could not respond.

It is no good to pay lip service when people's lives are in jeopardy. When Canadians need to make the call for search and rescue, someone has to respond. They cannot respond if the human resources and the infrastructure are not provided in this country to do so. That is the reason that our party has been calling upon the government on a daily basis to respond to those needs.

Just recently, my colleague, one of the senators, obtained a DND report through freedom of information, which I had an opportunity to read. In that report it highlighted very clearly the deficiencies that exist in search and rescue in northern Canada and the depleted and worn-out aircraft that are available and their inadequacy to respond in emergencies. It also talked about coastal waterways and response mechanisms of the Canadian Coast Guard and how those need to be improved as well.

• (1625)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Before we resume debate, it is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the question to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment is as follows: the hon. member for Nanaimo—Cowichan, Aboriginal Affairs.

Before we resume debate I would also remind members that, with the last speaker, some of the questions and answers were a little long, which was okay, but from this point on we will go back to our normal period of time for questions and comments.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Kootenay—Columbia

Mr. David Wilks (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I had a whole speech planned, and then when I was looking through this document, Dominion Coal Blocks jumped out at me on page 209.

To a lot of people here, the Dominion Coal Blocks probably do not mean a lot, but they are located in my area. I want to give a little history about them and discuss the importance of what is going to

happen with the federal government and industry with regard to moving forward on things not only in my area but across Canada.

In 1905 the Dominion Coal Blocks, which are commonly referred to in my area as parcels 73 and 82, were part of lands that were received from the federal government in exchange for the subsidy to use for the construction of the Crow'snest railway, which is commonly referred to now as the Crow rate. The coal blocks were created because of the coal that was found in the Elk Valley back in 1898. As a result of that, this land has sat for the last 107 years more or less on its own, with a bit of forestry and a bit of top burden being used over the years.

The importance of these lands to Canada, British Columbia, and the Elk Valley became evident several years ago, in 2011, the year I was elected to Parliament. The importance of coal with respect to Canada's exports was highly regarded.

The federal government has decided to divest itself of the Dominion Coal Blocks. This is huge for Canada and for the export of metallurgical coal. I want to briefly explain why it is so important.

There are very few places in the world where one can find metallurgical coal, or steel-making coal, as it is referred to. One of the main places that it can be found in the world is in the very southeast corner of British Columbia, in a place called the Elk Valley.

We produce about 1% of the national GDP each year from the export of metallurgical coal, and as a result of that the Dominion Coal Blocks become very important.

The decision to consider selling a portion of the Dominion Coal Blocks is consistent with the government's commitment to effectively use public resources. Private sector ownership of the Dominion Coal Blocks could allow the property to reach its full economic potential and maximize its contribution to growth, jobs, and new investments in British Columbia and across Canada while generating revenues for taxpayers.

It is really important to understand that by selling the coal blocks, not only would we obtain the opportunity to give back to the taxpayers of Canada, but more importantly, we would get to do the three things that we promised we would do as a government: create jobs, grow the economy, and ensure that Canada's prosperity continues to move forward. The Dominion Coal Blocks would do just that.

At this point in time it has not been decided what the final sale price would be. This is very valuable land, with some of the richest metallurgical coal deposits in the world, and as a result of that, it would benefit all Canadians.

Proposals received from foreign buyers will be assessed through a standard bid evaluation process. This would ensure consistency with the new guidelines for state-owned enterprises under the Investment Canada Act announced in December 2012.

Government Orders

That again is very important, because we understand that investment in Canada has to be of a global nature. Most of the coal that we dig out of the ground in the southeast corner of British Columbia is exported to foreign countries to ensure that steel-making companies around the world can continue to provide their products for an ever-expanding opportunity worldwide.

The Dominion Coal Blocks are believed to contain globally significant deposits of metallurgical coal. There is an important distinction between the market for thermal coal and metallurgical coal, which is used to make steel. A lot of people get the two confused. Although thermal coal is of great importance, it is used for heating. Metallurgical coal is used for making steel.

It is important that the Dominion Coal Blocks be released by the federal government.

• (1630)

Coal remains a key input for the manufacture of high-quality steel. As a result, long-term price expectations for metallurgical coal remain relatively strong despite recent price volatility. It is very important to understand that coal prices, especially for metallurgical coal, have fluctuated since 2008. It used to be at \$40 a tonne; it is now at \$150 a tonne, and two years ago it hit a peak of \$320 a tonne.

I would like say that I am splitting my time with the member for Kitchener Centre.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: The great member for Kitchener Centre.

Mr. David Wilks: The great member for Kitchener Centre. I forgot to mention that.

Part of the Dominion Coal Blocks are of huge value, and they are centred in a great area. Right now, as we speak, Teck Resources has five coal mine operations in the Elk Valley. I would like to provide an understanding of what that means to Canada from the perspective of economics and job creation.

In the Elk Valley, a small community of 15,000 people, about 5,000 people are employed in the coal mines, all open pit. From that, there is a contract with CP Rail, the single largest contract with CP Rail in Canada. Thirty per cent of its gross comes from the Elk Valley. There are 15 dedicated coal trains that send coal from the Elk Valley to Roberts Bank in Vancouver, of which five go in and five come out every day. Each train is worth \$2,295,000, which is equal to \$11,475,000 a day for each of the five trains that are exiting the Elk Valley. With the Dominion Coal Blocks, it will only mean more for the small communities of the Elk Valley, but what it contributes to Canada and the province of British Columbia is vitally important not only for health care but for schooling and many other of the provincial responsibilities the federal government gives money to.

It is interesting to hear colleagues in British Columbia sometimes call coal the four-letter dirty word. The reality is that dirty word, as I said, is about 1% of the national GDP.

Aside from that, I want to explain that with specific regard to the Dominion Coal Blocks, first nations have been at the table right from the get-go. The Ktunaxa first nations have been there right from the

get-go. They will be involved with the entire process and will have jobs in the coal industry, as they do now.

It is very important to understand that first nations are vitally important in my area of British Columbia. I believe they hold a strong, important value to the economic growth of the communities. I would like to applaud the Ktunaxa nation for being able to involve itself from the get-go.

One of the final things I want to say is that all resource development projects in British Columbia undergo a thorough environmental assessment process and face a high degree of regulatory oversight in order to manage and mitigate the environmental impacts. While the sale of the Dominion Coal Blocks would not be subject to an environmental assessment, any future development proposals would be subject to such an assessment.

I cannot say enough about the federal government divesting itself of the Dominion Coal Blocks. For the Elk Valley, it means 20, 30, or maybe even 100 more years of employment for the coal industry. Until we find a replacement for carbon, we will require metallurgical coal.

• (1635)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Kootenay—Columbia for his speech on what this omnibus bill means for the coal blocks. I had the pleasure of working with him on the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, and I hold him in pretty high esteem.

However, I would like to talk to him about the omnibus nature of the bill and the fact that the Standing Committee on Finance, of which I am a member, will be left to do all the work. The committee will have to examine this part of the omnibus bill and many others.

Since this is such an important and delicate issue, I would like to know if my colleague believes that it would have been better to separate this part of the bill and allow members of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources to examine it directly.

[*English*]

Mr. David Wilks: Mr. Speaker, the Dominion Coal Blocks, from the perspective of natural resources, have been studied since the 1940s, not only by the federal government but by the provincial government. The reality of the situation for the finance committee is that this will bring great value not only to the Government of Canada but to all Canadians and British Columbians. I believe that it is well suited within the bill.

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are starting to learn a bit more about what is in the minds of the Conservatives in the budget. With regard to infrastructure, in the budget in the spring they mentioned all these billions of dollars that were going to be spent over 10 years. That said, in Cape Breton we have the CBRM, the municipality, and it puts forward a report with all the infrastructure needs it has. It is all costed and includes timelines.

Government Orders

With great fanfare, we are hearing some announcements on infrastructure, such as the Toronto subway. When can a place like Cape Breton, or CBRM, sit down with the federal government and get some commitment for the infrastructure dollars it needs for the upcoming year? When are the other areas going to get what they need from this infrastructure budget?

Mr. David Wilks: Mr. Speaker, as the former mayor of Sparwood, B.C., for six years, I know one thing, and that is that we rely on the federal and provincial governments for money, but the reality is that the municipalities had better be shovel-ready when these announcements are made. We promised \$2.7 billion in the budget this year for the community improvement fund, which will be rolled out in due course. I strongly suspect that as long as they have projects that are shovel-ready, small communities in Canada will have ample opportunity to ensure that they can move forward with them, so I would encourage the member to tell his people to have shovel-ready projects ready.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am very interested in this proposal. I am glad to have the opportunity to pose a question directly to the member in whose riding the Dominion Coal Blocks are found.

I think a lot of people were relieved to hear that the federal government was paying attention to the ecological sensitivity of these lands in announcing earlier this fall that not all of the Dominion Coal Blocks would be put up for sale. Those who paid attention will know that this is an area of unique ecological importance and of transboundary importance. In fact, the United Nations has spoken of the critical importance of restricting mining in the area because of any threat to the waters in Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park, which at this point is the longest remaining wildlife corridor on the continent.

My question for the hon. member is this: of the 20,000 hectares in the Dominion Coal Blocks, how much will the federal government set aside to ensure ecological integrity, and not sell to metallurgical coal development?

Mr. David Wilks: Mr. Speaker, part of what is referred to as parcel 82 is subdivided and will be guaranteed to have no mining extraction from it. The part that flows into the Elk River drainage will be open for mineral extraction; the part that flows into the Flathead drainage will be protected from any mining at all. Lot 73, which falls north of parcel 82, will be open for bidding.

The member brings up a very valuable response. It is important for Canadians to understand that in this very interesting part of the country, heavy industry works very well with the environment. We have learned how to play well in the sandbox. We have some of the best ecological areas in all of North America and we are working side by side with heavy industry. It is in things like this, as the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands said, that we can agree that there are certain areas that we just cannot touch. We have come to understand that in the Elk Valley, and we are very proud of it.

• (1640)

Mr. Stephen Woodworth (Kitchener Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise today in support of budget implementation act No. 2. This act would ensure that important provisions in budget 2013 would be implemented.

Before discussing the highlights of the bill, I want to mention the government's plan for balancing the budget and I also want to mention Canada's economic success. This government has an effective plan to balance the budget by 2015. It is a challenging task, but achievable. As with budget 2013, the bill would help the government to achieve financial sustainability.

World leaders, of course, are very interested in Canada as a result of our government's example and our economic success. Canada leads the G7 in job creation, in income growth and in keeping debt levels low. Canada is among the few countries in the world with an AAA credit rating.

The government's continued sound fiscal management will generate continued respect, but despite our strong financial performance, there are still challenges that we must face. The United States is experiencing ongoing difficulties. The European Union is continuing its long upward climb.

Last week's historic trade deal between Canada and the European Union shows our government's determination to seize international opportunities for Canada. The government must reduce its deficit so Canadians will be encouraged to do the same. We must practise what we preach.

The deficit was a justified response to the 2008-09 economic recession, but it must be temporary. By 2015, the government will balance the budget and will introduce legislation to encourage balanced budgets in the future. This will ensure that in normal economic times there will be concrete guidelines for returning to balance after any economic crisis.

With an aggressive debt to GDP target of 25% by the year 2021 and a plan in place, this government is on the right track. I am proud that the government, during and after the world's worst economic recession in almost 80 years, remains recognized around the world as an example for others to follow. I am very proud of the leadership of our Prime Minister and our Minister of Finance.

The bill will deliver real solutions for Canadians and it reflects the goals of reducing the country's deficit and returning to balanced budgets. I want to highlight three aspects of the bill that I am particularly pleased with. I will elaborate on how the bill would support job creators, close tax loopholes and also respect taxpayer dollars.

Job creation is especially important to me as the representative for Kitchener Centre. BlackBerry, based in Kitchener—Waterloo, has suffered losses over the past couple of years and some of my constituents are on the hunt for jobs that match their highly talented skills. We enjoy some business incubators which support start-up companies and these include the renowned Communitech and also programs at the University of Waterloo and Wilfrid Laurier University, world-class leading centres of education.

Government Orders

As Canada's small business week wraps up tomorrow, I am grateful to say that this bill would extend the hiring credit for small business. This would benefit 560,000 job creators across Canada, and hundreds of those job creators are in my region of Kitchener—Waterloo. With over one million jobs created since the depth of the global recession, this hiring credit would create even more places for the bright minds of Canada's future.

The bill would also freeze employment insurance rates for three years, leaving \$660 million in the pockets of job creators and workers in 2014 alone. EI costs employees and employers hard-earned money. When I look at small businesses employing just two, three or four individuals, I see that this freeze will help owners to balance their books just as the government is balancing its books.

The government will also help the environment through the expansion of the accelerated capital cost allowance to include investments in clean energy generation. I was very pleased to see this. It adds to the government's existing investment for small business which is given through a small business financing program offered by Industry Canada and by loans offered by the Business Development Bank and by grants from the Canadian Youth Business Foundation.

● (1645)

Achieving clean energy solutions is a priority. The challenge business owners face is to secure initial capital to develop those long-term solutions. Finding cost-efficient clean energy solutions is critically important for our future and developing those solutions takes extensive research.

As a long-time member of the environment committee, I am always looking for ways to ensure a sustainable future. Job creators will be encouraged to continue looking for clean energy generation through the accelerated capital cost allowance measure in this bill.

I am confident that Bill C-4 will benefit small businesses, start-ups and job creators in Kitchener Centre over the next number of years based on these new initiatives.

A second focus within this bill is closing tax loopholes and combatting tax evasion. I want to highlight the importance of these measures.

Hard-working taxpayers can be confident that the bill would ensure that everyone would pay their fair share of taxes. When everyone is paying their fair share, it keeps taxes low for Canadian families and creates incentives to invest in Canada.

The government will introduce new administrative monetary penalties and offences to deter the use, possession, sale and development of software designed to falsify records for the purpose of tax evasion.

Although this government will always keep taxes low, we insist that all citizens pay all of their required taxes. Heavier penalties will force wrongdoers to use proper software and pay what they owe.

The government will also close more tax loopholes related to money transfers to ensure that everyone pays their fair share. It has already introduced rules to prevent foreign affiliates from converting

otherwise taxable surplus income into the form of loans. There is also an information reporting regime for tax avoidance transactions.

Finally, the government will extend in certain circumstances the time for the Canada Revenue Agency to reassess taxpayers who fail to report income from foreign property.

The third point that I will highlight are measures to respect taxpayer dollars through initiatives introduced in March, scheduled to be rolled out upon budget approval. For example, by modernizing the Canada student loans program with digital communication, the government will deliver efficient ways for students to pay down their debt quickly and to apply for loan approvals or extensions sooner.

Another timely measure in economic action plan 2013 are steps to prevent abuse of the temporary foreign worker program, abuses which concern my constituents. The program was created to fill acute labour needs when Canadians were not available. It was never intended to bring in temporary foreign workers to replace Canadian workers. The reforms brought forward in the spring budget stem from the government's ongoing review of this program.

The budget would increase the government's ability to revoke work permits, enabling immediate action against employers who did not comply with the rules. These changes would also require that employers using the temporary foreign workers program pay temporary foreign workers the prevailing wage for a job. These are common sense changes made to the program to remove unintended incentives to hire foreign workers. These reforms would ensure that Canadians would always be at the front of the hiring line.

Other measures will deliver important savings for Canadians. The fact is that many products needed to support families are consistently priced higher in Canada than in the United States. By removing tariffs on imported baby clothing and sports equipment, budget 2013 will ensure that difference is reduced.

We can all be pleased that budget implementation bill No. 2 delivers a solid plan for creating jobs and economic growth, all while keeping taxes low and still balancing the budget by 2015.

This bill is great news for my constituents in Kitchener Centre. I invite all members of the House to join me in supporting jobs, growth and long-term economic prosperity. I ask that members vote yes to this bill.

● (1650)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank my hon. colleague across the way for his speech.

Government Orders

A little earlier today, the President of the Treasury Board had a hard time answering one of the questions asked by my hon. colleague from Pontiac regarding how the Conservatives are changing the designation of essential services for Canadians in Bill C-4.

The definition of essential services will no longer be decided on jointly by workers and the government. Instead, the government will unilaterally decide which services are essential.

My question to my colleague opposite is simple: what services will the government designate as essential?

[English]

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: Mr. Speaker, I find the member's preamble really quite surprising. I have known and watched the President of the Treasury Board for many years and I find him to be not only very articulate but, as with all of the ministers on this side of the House, very hard working and very dedicated to the best interests of all Canadians. I look forward to working with him for many more years to come.

The reality is that everything a government does is subject to law, to judicial interpretation and to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Although I have some experience in law, I do not pretend to be an expert, not nearly as much of an expert as my colleague opposite is on labour unions and their rights. I suspect she is an expert.

The courts pretty well jealously look after charter guarantees, freedom of association and that labour rights are protected accordingly. I expect that any decision made by the government to designate an essential public service will be based on real need and quite justifiable to the courts or anyone else.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we noticed that the government has these logos or terms that it likes to talk a lot about, such as the economic action plan, job growth and long-term security.

The government takes the slogans it develops and literally spends millions and millions of dollars, in excess of half a billion dollars, in advertising, trying to get Canadians to think that these are wonderful times.

The most popular petition I have been tabling is one that affects seniors. It is on the government's decision to increase the age of retirement from 65 to 67. If the economy is doing so well, why is the government so determined to make the change by increasing the age of retirement for seniors?

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: Mr. Speaker, I am tempted to say, considering the question came from a member of the Liberal Party, that there is nothing that can compare to the \$1 billion the Ontario Liberal Party wasted on moving gas plants. That member and his party have nothing to complain about when it comes to the question of government expenditures.

On the question of changing the age of retirement, it may have escaped the member's notice, but when the original OAS scheme was introduced in the 1960s, the average life expectancy was around 72 or 73 years. Consequently retiring at age 65 meant something

entirely different than it means today when the average life expectancy is more like 83 or 85 years.

The costs of supporting someone through a longer retirement are just an economic reality. As much as the third party and the NDP might wish to ignore economic realities, a responsible government cannot. Also, the demographics have changed. People living longer and healthier lives means that there are more seniors who need to be supported by fewer people still participating in the working economy.

• (1655)

[Translation]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, before beginning, I would like to let you know that I will be sharing my time with my charming colleague from La Pointe-de-l'Île.

It is my privilege today to be able to speak to Bill C-4, A second act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 21, 2013 and other measures. I am not privileged because of the quality of the bill, which still leaves something to be desired. I am privileged because so few parliamentarians will be able to debate this bill.

Just this morning, in fact, in the hours following its introduction in the House, the government imposed time allocation on Bill C-4.

After forcing us to wait a whole month before resuming work by proroguing Parliament, the Conservatives decided to bring in a time allocation motion that prevents members of Parliament from speaking to this omnibus bill. The Leader of the Government in the House of Commons decided to move time allocation on the bill in order to fast-track the debate. However, this bill is not just a simple legislative bill.

By means of Bill C-4, the Conservatives are trying for the fourth time in two years to escape the scrutiny of parliamentarians and the public. They are trying to get major changes through Parliament without sufficient study by Parliament, despite the fact that some of the amendments in Bill C-4 are meant to correct mistakes they made in their big rush to pass the last omnibus bill.

I will be voting against Bill C-4 both because of its content and because of the process used, which I feel is wrong. The New Democratic Party will not support the Conservatives in their attempt to avoid parliamentary oversight. The bill contains many extremely complicated measures that deserve to be studied a great deal more attentively.

The government before us today is worn out and negligent. The NDP refuses to play the Conservatives' game. We must take Parliament and our institutions seriously and act accordingly.

Taking advantage of the introduction of Bill C-4 to amend through the back door a number of measures that are not even related to the budget shows a total lack of consideration for Canadians. The government is trying to make major changes secretly and without consulting those who will be affected by those changes.

Government Orders

I realize that the Conservatives are not really crusaders for consultation, but they should take the time to listen to what Canadians are saying. Canadians are giving serious consideration to what is currently happening on Parliament Hill. They are losing confidence in the political class, and the Conservatives are doing absolutely nothing to help them regain that confidence quickly. I am highly critical of the government's lack of study and I am deeply worried about the consequences it may have for our country. It greatly undermines action by Parliament.

I would like to highlight a few examples to clarify my point, and I would like to start with the frontal attack on the rights of workers. For the President of the Treasury Board, it must be absurd for the government to have to negotiate and deal with workers in good faith. Please let me explain.

First, the designation of essential services to Canadians would change with Bill C-4. At present, workers and the government decide in tandem what an essential service is and what it is not. Now the government wants to make the decision about essential services on its own.

How does this affect workers? Well, it is a direct attack on the right to strike. Essential services are services that must be made available to Canadians during a strike. The repercussions of this decision are extremely serious.

With the proposed changes, unions cannot call a strike if public servants designated as essential by the government are involved. Who is designated as essential, though? This question has gone unanswered. I even tried to get an answer from my Conservative colleague opposite who just spoke, and he was very good at being evasive.

● (1700)

My colleague from Pontiac tried to ask the President of the Treasury Board about this in question period earlier today. He refused to answer. We heard absolutely nothing.

Another major change to workers' rights is the change in the definition of the word "danger". A worker who does not feel safe in his workplace can inform a health and safety officer of his concerns. Bill C-4 changes the definition to imminent danger or serious danger. What do these new changes mean? What tangible effect will this have on our workers? These are valid questions.

Furthermore, workers will no longer contact their health and safety officers about these problems. Instead they will contact the minister's office. Will he work 24/7 to respond to workers in danger? Will it be more difficult for them to exercise their rights? Will there be more accidents in our workplaces? The official opposition is truly worried about the health and safety of Canadian workers.

What worries me the most is that these measures that I just spoke about, which affect the rights of workers, have absolutely nothing to do with a budget implementation bill. What are the Conservatives playing at?

In conclusion, I would like to briefly mention the direct attack that the Conservatives made on francophones throughout Canada. Once again, I will provide some explanation.

I would like to quote an article by Marie Vastel that was published in the October 24 issue of *Le Devoir*. It says:

When the government introduces any major legislation, it holds a briefing for MPs, senators and their assistants in order to explain that legislation. Usually, simultaneous translation is provided and officials then answer questions in both official languages.

However, such was not the case on Tuesday, when the briefing on the budget implementation bill that was introduced that same morning began in English only.

The government was giving a presentation on a bill that is over 300 pages long, the fourth mammoth bill that the Conservative government has introduced, and there was no simultaneous translation from English into French. It was an NDP member whose mother tongue is French who stood up during the government's briefing and asked for the French translation, saying that the bill was extremely complex, that it was over 300 pages long and that she did not understand the details. After she spoke up, there was some commotion. In the end, another English MP spoke up and said that someone would have to translate so that the member could understand. People left the room in protest and the government finally decided to postpone the briefing to Wednesday, which was yesterday. The briefing therefore began after Bill C-4 was introduced in the House.

The opposite never would have happened. There never would have been a briefing in French without simultaneous translation into English. That would never happen. Honestly, I am a bit surprised that it took so long for them to react. I cannot believe that this happened. Some MPs speak English, others speak French. Those are our two official languages, and this demonstrates a lack of respect, not only for the Quebec nation, but also for francophones across the country. I am extremely disappointed in the way Bill C-4 treats Canadians.

This bill touches on many areas; we could go on for days. This bill affects more than just workers' rights. The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration is given new powers, and I have yet to find the link between that and a budget implementation bill. It affects unions' venture capital funds. It addresses the mistake of increasing taxes on credit unions and so on. There are even changes to the Supreme Court. It makes no sense.

I want to say, once again, that I am extremely disappointed in how the Conservatives opposite are treating Canadians. I look forward to seeing how the voters will treat them in 2015.

● (1705)

[English]

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her comments. However, I take issue with the fact that she is making the statement that this is not fair to people across Canada, including Quebec.

Government Orders

There are 800,000 persons with disabilities in this country who are ready, willing and able to go to work. In this budget we are funding the program that will assist those people in finding jobs and match them to jobs. Is this something in her mind that is fair to the people who have disabilities in this country, especially persons in Quebec who have disabilities?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre: Mr. Speaker, while talking to my colleague from La Pointe-de-l'Île, I tried to take notes as quickly as possible.

It is good to mention people with reduced mobility. In my opinion, it is extremely important. There is a great deal of consultation on the subject. I also think that most of my colleagues have talked to people in their riding about the tax credit for persons with disabilities.

I have a question about that. Can someone explain to me why the Conservatives have eliminated training on the tax credit for persons with disabilities? They are concealing information. We are compelled to distribute information everywhere, because the government no longer wishes to make information available on this. Playing cat and mouse with the Canadian people does not lead to good outcomes.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to add to the comments of the member regarding the idea of the bill preparation and what should have been done.

I think she is quite right in her assessment that many people, if not most people, would feel offended by it. If I was going to a bill debriefing and everything was provided only in French, being primarily Anglophone, I would be quite upset about it, and that should be vice versa. We are in fact a bilingual country. Given the nature and importance of budgets and how much time the government had to do the job right, I would have thought that presenting the bill as well as the supporting documents in a bilingual format would have been an absolute given. I would ask the member to provide some comment.

We noted that the day on which the bill briefing was taking place, we actually had the time allocation notice given. We did not even have a complete bill debriefing before the government introduced time allocation. I wonder if the member could provide some comment on that, as well as the fact that we have the bill under time allocation today.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Winnipeg North. He touched on a number of extremely important subjects I raised in my speech.

For example, he said that simultaneous interpretation was not available at the briefing for parliamentarians. My colleague represents a constituency where many Franco-Manitobans live. In his riding, that probably made some people's hair stand on end.

The comment I could make relates to the fact that there is still a time allocation motion on an omnibus bill that is more than 300 pages long, and the two official languages are not being respected. This is something extremely important to bring to the

attention of Canadians. We have to tell them what kind of respect the Conservative government has for the people of Canada. I do not believe there is much to add on this subject, since the actions of the government in the House speak for themselves.

• (1710)

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak to Bill C-4, which is of extreme importance to Canadians and Quebeckers.

We are living in critical times. It is time for us to have a productive debate here for Canadians. The situation is critical. I will explain why it is extremely important to discuss this bill without having a time limit imposed on us. Canadians need us today, and they expect us to take action because their indebtedness and that of young Canadians are at critical levels.

First of all, I want to say how disappointed I am with everything the government has done since its throne speech. Today is the first time I have had a chance to rise, and I am doing so under a guillotine. I know that the Conservatives will cite all kinds of reasons for that, in particular that this bill must be passed extremely quickly.

However, the situation is so serious that the government has no reason not to allow a fair and democratic debate in the House of Commons.

I really believed, but wrongly so, that the Conservatives would take the summer and the additional month to reflect and perhaps even consider the importance of democracy and respect for democracy. However, this bill shows that exactly the opposite is true.

This is the fourth omnibus bill. We know how the Prime Minister shouted and tore his shirt when he was in opposition and the Liberal government tried to introduce omnibus bills. Unfortunately, that was then and this is now, as they say.

This bill is 300 pages long and amends at least 70 statutes, some of which have absolutely nothing to do with the budget. We can already see the government's bad intentions.

It is introducing a budget that, on the whole, attacks workers' rights, amends rules respecting the Supreme Court, and so on. There is not much about tax evasion or young people, for example. As for the government's new approach, it leaves something to be desired.

This is really a shame for democracy and for the Canadians and Quebeckers who are supposed to be represented here. This government's scandals and mismanagement are so unimaginable I no longer know where to turn. I do not even know where to start.

This is a failure. The government's economic plan is a failure. Instead of tackling household debt, it attacks workers' rights and the family itself. However, it is not focusing on the real problems. For example, the Conservatives are going to leave us with the biggest deficit in Canadian history.

Government Orders

It is unbelievable how the Conservatives can boast, but they offer nothing concrete. In 2015, Canadians will see how badly the Conservatives have mismanaged the economy. Canadians will see that the Conservatives have left them to deal with the biggest environmental, economic and social deficit in Canadian history. Canadians will have no trouble seeing that record because the figures prove it.

In addition, what is disturbing is that most of the measures in this budget are not budget measures. They amend the rules for appointing judges to the Supreme Court. Perhaps the Prime Minister just realized he had to correct his own mistakes.

I challenge any Conservative to rise in the House and show me how changing the rules for the Supreme Court will help Canadian families get out of record debt. Can any Conservative explain that to us? I would really like someone to do that. I can hear them laughing on the other side. I do not think this is funny.

• (1715)

Today, my colleague from Gatineau moved a motion to remove the appointment of Supreme Court judges from the budget implementation bill.

I sincerely hope that the government will take this proposal to heart, because it is the kind of proposal that must be discussed. However, this should not be done within the framework of an omnibus bill, because these are things that involve our justice system, not our economic system.

The Conservatives never get tired of saying that Canadians know they cannot rely on the NDP to put their needs first and give middle-class Canadians a well-deserved break. However, the NDP's view of the economy is one in which we maximize opportunities by drawing on Canada's enormous advantages, in order to give Canadians the best in everything.

We have the best score on the budget, from sea to sea. This is a fact. It is as simple as that. My colleague has been shouting for a while now that I am being rhetorical, but it is a fact. The proof is in the figures. The NDP governments have the best scores in terms of budgets and finance.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Ms. Ève Péclet: I hear my colleague from Manitoba shouting at me.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to have some respect. I would like to be able to talk without being called names by my Conservative colleagues on the other side of the House. Thank you very much. I am entitled to respect when I am speaking. If they do not agree with what I am saying, that is all right, but I do not want them shouting at me when I am speaking.

The gap between rich and poor is growing. We are seeing an increase in the cost of living, because the Conservatives have forgotten about the middle class in all their budget measures.

We are seeing an increase in the cost of living, and incomes are lower than ever and they keep on dropping. Of course, if you are a highly paid executive, there is no problem. On the other hand, what is the government going to tell the people in the Toronto area, for

instance, who cannot find stable employment? Will it tell them to take two or three jobs so they can make ends meet? No, that is not what a government should say.

In September, Statistics Canada announced that Canadian household debt had reached an all-time high of 166%. How is it that since 2006 the Conservatives have not been able to do anything to stop this increase?

This means that for every dollar a person has, he or she owes \$1.66 on a loan or a credit card.

In 2008, our neighbours to the south in the United States learned the hard way just how seriously over-indebtedness could hurt their economy.

I think it is time to help Canadian families. Economists agree that Canadian household debt is a threat to Canada's economy. Clearly, under the Conservatives, we are on the path to jumping in there with both feet.

The economic situation is even worse among young people, where the unemployment rate has reached 14%. This means that the next generation of workers will not be able to acquire the experience they need to replace the generation that went before.

Increased unemployment among young people early in their careers, and the precarious household debt situation—I think I have clearly described the critical situation to which I referred in my introduction and about which the government has refused to do anything.

In other words, they are in favour of justice and democracy, except when it does not suit their purposes.

We support various amendments in Bill C-4 that aim at reducing tax evasion. We support those amendments, but we are very concerned that the Conservatives are not paying serious attention to the issue of tax havens and the people and the companies that are not making a fair or just contribution to the Canadian economy.

As my colleague from Alfred-Pellan mentioned, we have here a budget that is once again a direct attack on the rights of Canadians.

As I have one minute left, I would simply like to tell the Conservatives that although they say we just vote against everything, we are only waiting for them to invite us to work with them in providing Canadians with a budget that is fair and equitable and gives everyone an opportunity to participate in the Canadian economy, not only the people who are on their side, but all Canadians and all Quebeckers.

• (1720)

[*English*]

Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was truly bowled over by my colleague's praise of NDP governments. One only has to come from Manitoba, as I do. High taxes and rising unemployment are the track record of NDP governments. Thankfully, the people of Nova Scotia saw fit to throw the NDP out after one term. In B.C., they took only one look at the NDP. The NDP was leading in the polls for about a month of that campaign. Sure enough, the voters in B.C. threw them out.

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One looks at the track record of hard, left-wing governments around the world. Look at the ruins of Detroit, the chaos in Greece, and entrepreneurs leaving France. Why does my hon. friend still believe in this toxic, outmoded, socialist ideology?

Ms. Ève Pécelet: Mr. Speaker, my colleague wants to know why? It is because the Minister of Finance has a report that says so.

[*Translation*]

I would just like to read a portion of a press release:

Tuesday the Department of Finance released its annual Fiscal Reference Tables... the NDP comes out on top as the best fiscal managers...since 1980...with a 44.9% record of balancing the budget. Conservatives come in second, with 40.8% record of balanced budgets. The Liberals score lowest as fiscal managers, with a record of only 25.0% balanced budgets.

[*English*]

Why do I believe so? It is because their own ministry says so.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, something the member for Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette and I share is that we have a bit of knowledge about the Manitoba government. I served many years with the NDP in government. I could tell you a litany of issues. Do not believe everything you read. That is one of the things I would tell you when it comes to the document you might be looking at.

I could tell you that the most recent debacle in the province of Manitoba from the NDP is with regard to its determination to lie. It said in the last provincial election that it would not increase the provincial sales tax. It was actually the premier, Greg Selinger, making that bold statement on TV. Of course, if you take a look at the NDP budget, you will see that it increased the sales tax from 7% to 8%. I know that this is the government you want to model yourself after.

We can talk about balanced budgets during the one year I was there, when the New Democrats borrowed money to get themselves in a balanced situation. That was one of the weirdest budgets one would have seen. The provincial auditor said that they had, in fact, cooked the books to create that balanced budget.

Given some of the facts about Manitoba that both I and the member for Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette have about the NDP governments in the Prairies, would you consider rephrasing some of your statements?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please. We have been back eight days, and already this is the third time I have said to this member that he ought to address his comments to the Chair, not to his colleagues. It happens repeatedly.

There is a reason the rule exists in this place to pass comments through the Chair and that is to maintain decorum and respect in this place. I would ask the co-operation of all hon. members in this regard.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for La Pointe-de-l'Île.

Ms. Ève Pécelet: Mr. Speaker, believe the Liberals hold the record for promises not kept. They can take my word for it.

I remember a prime minister who, one day, in order to get himself elected, said that he was going to reduce the federal tax. I will not name him out of respect for his colleagues, but the member knows very well who I am talking about. This prime minister then explained that unfortunately, he could not do so because the financial situation was too grim.

My friend can perhaps continue to spout Liberal propaganda and draw applause from the Conservatives. This shows clearly that between Liberals and Conservatives, there is no difference. The fact remains that the report issued by the Department of Finance unfortunately states that the Liberals balanced their budget only 25% of the time.

I know it pains my colleague, the member for Winnipeg North, to hear it, but the Liberals did not do their homework, while the NDP did.

I know it is frustrating, but that is life.

• (1725)

[*English*]

Mrs. Stella Ambler (Mississauga South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to speak on some of the key initiatives in economic action plan 2013 no. 2.

Our government remains focused on the economy and creating jobs, all while keeping taxes low and returning to balanced budgets. The key to success is balancing the efforts to support job creation and economic growth while respecting commitments to reduce deficits and return to balanced budgets over the medium term.

With the help of Canada's economic action plan, Canada has experienced one of the best economic performances among the G7 countries, both during the global recession and throughout the recovery. Canada has created over one million net new jobs, nearly 90% full time and nearly 85% private sector, since the depth of the global recession in July 2009. This is the strongest job growth record in the G7. Not only that, but both the IMF and the OECD project Canada to have among the strongest growth in the G7 in the years ahead. In fact, the OECD recently projected that Canada will lead the G7 in growth in 2013.

Our government is also committed to keeping taxes low. Unlike the high-tax NDP and Liberals, our Conservative government believes in low taxes and leaving more money where it belongs, in the pockets of hard-working Canadian families and job-creating businesses. Since 2006 we have cut taxes over 160 times, reducing the overall tax burden to its lowest level in 50 years. Our strong record of tax relief has meant savings for a typical family of four in 2013 of over \$3,200. Unfortunately, the NDP opposition thinks that higher taxes are the answer.

Just a couple of weeks ago the NDP leader reconfirmed his party's plan to impose a crippling tax hike on job creators and the millions of Canadians they employ, even as they continue to cope with a challenging global economy. As if imposing a \$20-billion carbon tax on Canadians was not enough, the NDP leader has another multi-billion dollar tax hike he wants to impose. At a time of global economic uncertainty the NDP wants to take over \$10 billion each year out of the pockets of Canadian entrepreneurs and businesses to fund big, bloated government schemes. This punishing NDP tax hike would target job creators, especially small and medium-sized companies with a nearly 50% increase in their tax bills.

When I was very young I started working for my father who had his own hardware wholesale business. Small business taxes at that time were crippling for him. While he managed to stay in business for many years, he always appreciated it when governments understood that small businesses were not in the business of feeding the government coffers. Their business is to sell goods and to employ people.

My father ran his own business over the course of 35 years. The periods of greatest growth were during times when business tax rates were reasonable and low. Our current Minister of Finance and our government understand this and that is why we continue to support job-creating businesses, like the one that I worked for when I was younger.

Of course I did not have to apply for the job. I was given the job automatically because my father owned the business, but I still worked hard. The business did well when it was not all about red tape and spending many hours working out the calculations needed to pay that kind of debt to the government. That is why I want to talk about the small business advantages that we are giving them and the tax increases that would kill jobs and stall Canada's economy. Clearly, Canadians cannot afford these risky tax-and-spend schemes. Thankfully, as I said, our Conservative government understands that high taxes are not the answer.

• (1730)

Our government also understands the importance of general fiscal responsibility. Indeed, before the global recession hit, our Conservative government paid down \$37 billion in debt, bringing Canada's debt to its lowest level in 25 years. This fiscal prudence and impressive debt reduction placed Canada in the best possible position to weather the global recession.

When the global recession hit, we were able to respond quickly and effectively with Canada's economic action plan. While other countries continue to struggle with debt that is spiralling out of control, Canada is in the best fiscal position of any G7 nation. In fact, our net to GDP ratio in 2012 was 34.6%, the lowest level among G7 countries, the second lowest being Germany at 57.2%. We can see the gap there. The G7 average is 90.4%.

While the NDP and Liberals want to engage in reckless spending, our government is on track to return to balanced budgets in 2015. Our plan to return to balanced budgets is working.

In 2012-13, the deficit fell to \$18.9 billion. This was down by more than one-quarter from the deficit of \$26.3 billion in 2011-12, and down by nearly two-thirds from the \$55.6 billion deficit

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recorded in 2009-10. Our government's responsible spending of taxpayer dollars played an important part in these results with direct program expenses falling by 1.2% from the prior year, and by 3.8% from 2010-11.

Overall, measures taken by our Conservative government since budget 2010 will result in a total ongoing savings of roughly \$14 billion. This legislation builds on this effort. Bill C-4 will phase out inefficient and ineffective tax subsidies. One example is the labour-sponsored venture capital corporations tax credit. Indeed, a number of independent experts have recognized this subsidy as being ineffective when it comes to creating jobs and supporting Canadian businesses.

Members should not take my word for it. I will tell them what others are saying about this tax credit, the labour-sponsored venture capital corporations tax credit.

A recent paper by the Montreal Economic Institute says:

All things considered, labour-sponsored funds are financial instruments that fulfill neither their economic objectives, namely to make venture capital available to help Quebec businesses, nor their financial objectives of offering a good return to contributors, their performance being interesting only by taking into account the additional tax credit.

Jack Mintz, a respected economist, said:

These credits have not only been ineffective in generating more venture capital, but they have also helped finance poor projects that should have never been funded in the first place.

He said that in 2012.

The C.D. Howe Institute also recognized that providing tax relief to these funds has been:

...a disappointing use of taxpayers' money. Such funds have been shown in multiple studies, including this one, to do a poor job of achieving public policy aims.

That is from the C.D. Howe Institute E-Brief of September 2012.

I also want to talk about closing tax loopholes, which is contained in Bill C-4, loopholes and other schemes that only benefit a select few. Closing these loopholes is important because when everyone pays their fair share, our tax rates can be kept low, which makes Canada a more attractive place to work, save and invest.

In fact, since 2006 and including measures proposed in economic action plan 2013, our government has closed over 75 tax loopholes. This will result in \$2.5 billion in additional revenues in 2013-14, and more than \$2.6 billion in 2014-15. Indeed, the legislative proposals in budget 2013 to close tax loopholes are estimated to raise \$100 million in revenue in 2013-14, rising to over \$270 million in 2017-18, for a total of close to \$1 billion over the next five years.

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• (1735)

Shamefully, the NDP has voted against every single attempt by our government to close tax loopholes since 2006. I am not sure why it is doing that. I do not think they understand the importance of the one million jobs that have been created since the depth of the recession.

We understand there is still more work to be done and that Canada is not immune to the kinds of global challenges that come from beyond our borders. That is why we are so convinced that our job-creating measures are important and that we need to continue along this track. That is why I believe the legislation should go forward quickly.

The House may know that I had the good fortune to work with our esteemed Minister of Finance, who has won global accolades around the world for his work, his fiscal responsibility, his understanding of Canada's economy and for making sure that we are leading the G7 on so many indicators. It is difficult to be humble on his behalf. The Minister of Finance is, I believe, responsible in large part for the major credit rating agencies giving Canada a rock solid AAA credit rating. Moody's, Fitch, and Standard and Poor's have all given Canada this solid rating. It is something we take for granted. Canadians do not think about that every day. They are able to go about their business knowing that our economy is well looked after by the Conservative government and this Minister of Finance. It is important for Canadians to understand that our commitment to balance the budget by 2015 is an important one. It is ambitious, but we have made that commitment. Ultimately, it enables us to keep taxes low. We have cut taxes 160 times.

Earlier today my colleague from Winnipeg South Centre was talking about her family and the fact that she is not only a chartered accountant but a mother and that she appreciates the measures our government has taken on both of those fronts. I would say too that it is about helping families. We are looking at many countries in Europe that cannot afford to give tax breaks to families. They cannot afford to offer tax credits such as the children's fitness tax credit, which I have taken advantage of with my own children, the new children's arts tax credit and the universal child care tax benefit. These are the kinds of things that help families, putting money directly into their pockets so that they can use those funds for whatever they feel is necessary.

That is the kind of choice we like to provide to parents. We would not be able to do that if we did not have a strong economy. It is all about jobs, the economy and maintaining that long-term economic growth and prosperity. That is why I wanted to speak to the bill today, Canada's economic action plan.

If I might, I would like to compare that to something the Liberal leader said over the summer. I believe it was at the Liberals' caucus retreat. When asked when he would release his plan for Canada's economy, he said that it was too soon for him to be talking about the economy. He did not plan to release that for a long time, possibly a couple more years, maybe before the next election.

• (1740)

It is a good thing that the Liberal Party is the third party in the House, because I cannot imagine a prime minister without a plan for

the economy. He has been the Liberal leader for many months now, since the beginning of the year, and he apparently needs a few more years to come up with an economic plan.

I am so proud that we have a Prime Minister and a Minister of Finance in Canada who already have a plan, and that plan is working.

I would be happy to take questions, if there is time, and talk about my support for job creation and this bill's support for job creation and Canada's economic action plan, which is working.

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member extols the virtues of our Minister of Finance. It reminds me of a time when the finance minister sat on the front bench of the Government of Ontario. Many front bench members of the Conservative cabinet also sat on the front bench of the Conservative Government of Ontario of that time.

One of the most amazing things that happened is this, and it underlines the whole narrative, the whole foundation of neo-conservative, neo-liberal economics. When that Conservative government took office in Ontario, a subway line had already begun on Eglinton. The hole was dug. One of the first things the Conservative government of the day did was to spend millions upon millions of taxpayer dollars to fill that hole. That is what they did. That is the kind of economics and support for small business that the member extols today.

I wonder if she could speak to the disconnect between her speech and the reality of the economic policies of this government?

Mrs. Stella Ambler: Mr. Speaker, let us talk about disconnect for a moment. I lived through the dark years of Bob Rae from 1990 to 1995. Some days I wonder how we did it in Ontario. Those were dark days. I do not believe Ontario had an AAA credit rating. In fact, I think it was quite the opposite. If there was a ZZZ tax rating, that is what Ontario—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order. I appreciate that there is genuine enthusiasm for what the member for Mississauga South has had to say, and I am sure she would love the opportunity to address the question from the member for Davenport.

The hon. member for Mississauga South.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: Mr. Speaker, I relish the opportunity. I worked for the illustrious Conservative premier who Ontario elected in 1995. Ontarians were waiting for election day in 1995, so that they could throw out the NDP Bob Rae government. In fact, I think the exact same thing happened in Nova Scotia recently. It has been proven that NDP governments do not work.

Speaking of subways, I wish I could talk a little more about subways, because there was a great announcement in Toronto of \$660 million to build a subway. I know the member for Scarborough Centre is so pleased about that. So are many other Torontonians.

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Labrador, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to confirm for my colleague that, yes indeed, they have thrown out the NDP government in Nova Scotia.

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Our Liberal leader has certainly outlined the tremendous opportunity we have in the economy of Canada and a platform that we will bring forward as the Liberal Party. One of the main planks in this platform that she needs to realize is paying down the huge debt that has been accumulated under the Conservative government. It has increased the debt by \$150 billion since it took office.

The Liberal governments in the past have paid down a debt of \$150 billion in our country once, and we are poised to do it again. It will be done through the economic initiatives that will be announced by the Liberal leader. I want to make sure that the hon. member knows that.

• (1745)

Mrs. Stella Ambler: Mr. Speaker, what I do know is that when the Liberals are in power they balance the budget by cutting transfer payments to the provinces. That might be the easy way of doing it, but that is not how we are doing it because it is not the right way. When it is done that way, it hurts children, seniors and families. That is not how we are going to balance the budget.

I imagine that if the Liberals have a plan, that must be their plan. Let us hope Canadians do not fall for that, because that is not the right way to balance the budget.

Mr. Ed Holder (London West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was very touched by the comments of the member for Mississauga South when she talked in terms of growing up in a family business and what that meant to her.

It made me think about the opportunities I had, not so much in a family business. My dad was a pretty poor truck driver from Holderville, New Brunswick, and my mum was from Cape Breton. Our family was born out there, so we never had quite the same opportunities, not that opportunities are not there on the east coast, but my parents moved to Upper Canada and some things happened from there, so we have carried on in this family business tradition.

Appreciating the importance of family business, and I am thinking of how small business can survive, what does the member feel this budget would do to help small businesses to grow, because those folks are the real job creators in this country?

Mrs. Stella Ambler: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for sharing his story. Maybe he could confirm by a nod whether the town was really called Holderville. It is excellent that the town was really called Holderville.

It sounds as if my friend and colleague understands small businesses too; for example, what a great advantage the hiring tax credit is to 500,000 businesses in Canada. We are talking about people who need a job, want a job, want to work hard and want to put food on the table and be able to do their fair share in their communities.

Our policies, initiatives and budget and this economic action plan allow them to do that. That is why I am so proud. It fits in nicely with what I did when I was growing up. It fits in with the kinds of values I learned through hard work and the fact that my father ran his own business for almost 40 years.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I also grew up in a family business and I appreciate some of the

points overall. I have been listening to speeches all day and the references to job creators, to businesses. Right now we have very low corporate tax rates, lower than other countries in the OECD. As a result of the corporate profits from any company in the U.S., they now have transferred those corporations from paying taxes to Canada to paying taxes to the United States.

Economists from Mark Carney, our former bank governor to the RBC economist look at what has happened. Corporations are not reinvesting that money in hiring Canadians. They are not job creators. These deep tax cuts are where jobs go to die. It is now called dead money. Over \$600 billion in dead money, an astonishing 32% of GDP, is not being used by those corporations to create jobs to invest in Canada to modernize.

I wonder when the Conservative Party is going to recognize that this is a failed strategy and that there is no empirical evidence whatsoever that its strategies are creating jobs.

• (1750)

Mrs. Stella Ambler: Mr. Speaker, I would disagree that there is no empirical evidence. The evidence is in the numbers, over one million net new jobs created. We talk about it a lot because it is really important. We are talking about lowering taxes for small business. We are talking about lowering taxes 160 times for ordinary average Canadians.

If my friend and colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands does not believe that lowering corporate taxes for businesses creates jobs, then we do have a fundamental disagreement. I think that when government takes away from the bottom line of corporations or businesses, they are going to look into reinvesting that and expanding. When they expand and reinvest, they need to hire more people. That is how it works, and that is why we lower the taxes.

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise in this place on behalf of the good people of Davenport in the great city of Toronto to speak to Bill C-4, the budget implementation act.

This is another example of a missed opportunity for the current Conservative government in terms of job creation and in terms of accountability and transparency. It really underlines the mean-spiritedness in which the government participates in the process of bills and law-making in this House.

I have been listening very carefully to some of the debates and comments from my hon. colleagues on the government side, and it is almost as though they live in this fantasy world where they give the greatest gifts to the wealthiest corporations and keep saying over and over what neo-conservatives have been saying for 30 years, that these wealthy corporations will just trickle that money down like manna from heaven and we will all just be fine.

I listened with particular interest to my colleague from Mississauga who talked about her father's small business. I also listened to the member across the way, who grew up in the town named after him, talk about his family and small business.

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Where I come from in Toronto, small businesses are one- and two-person operations. Small businesses are operated out of people's kitchens and basements. Small businesses are a mother and father working 12 or 13 hours a day running a store on Bloor Street. They are looking for some relief and what they are hearing is that the government has been doling out these wonderfully handsome tax breaks to the wealthiest corporations in Canada, who are not investing back into the economy but are sitting on the money. There is nothing in this bill that deals with one of the most significant issues of our time, and that is how we deal with the explosion of precarious work in our society.

In Toronto, in the GTA right now, in the member's riding of Mississauga South no doubt, almost 50% of workers cannot access a full-time, stable job. That is an outrageous statistic, which should engage this entire House, not just because it is my city but because it is an outrageous statistic. We are letting down and failing workers, and in particular we are failing young workers.

This budget implementation act, which would again throw in more than 70 law changes with everything but the kitchen sink in here, has not a single thing to address precarious work in our society. We listen to the rhetoric of job creation on one hand and we see the stats on the other hand where 15%, 16% or 17% of young people are unemployed, and that is the official rate that does not include those who have given up and those who are working very marginal, part-time jobs. This is the reality for so many urban workers: precarious work. People cannot find a full-time job. We are talking about folks who are now working as independent contractors.

The Conservatives are so consumed, almost obsessed, with their attack on organized labour that they cannot understand that people who run a small business want customers to come in. Those customers actually have to make a living wage in order to spend some of their money in the store. This is what the Conservatives do not understand. They do not understand the realities of urban workers today. They do not understand the reality of small business today.

We proposed many measures that would make it easier for small business owners to deal with their business.

● (1755)

We have a consumer program this government has borrowed some ideas from. They should actually take the whole thing. We would be willing to give it to them, because there are some excellent ideas, and they would actually deal with some of the main problems small businesses face with things like transfer fees for credit cards at point of sale, and that sort of thing. These are the issues many small businesses bring to us, which is why we have brought our proposals to the Canadian public on some of the very important issues for small business.

This is a government that, along with the Liberals, pillaged the employment insurance fund to the tune of about \$57 billion and that is making it harder for Canadian workers to access the program to which they contributed. This is not the government's money. It is workers' money. We have legions of workers who cannot access basic employment insurance, basic income security, in times of need. Those times of need for many people are right now.

The Conservatives talk about job creation. They never talk about the kinds of jobs they are creating. In the GTA, we have a preponderance of \$10.50 an hour jobs. I do not know, and I would be interested to find out from the member from Mississauga, if people in her riding could live on \$10 an hour. Could they pay their rent? Could they raise a family? Can people raise a family on minimum wage in Toronto or in this country? The answer is absolutely not. It is very difficult. That is why people are working multiple jobs. It is why the fabric of our society is in such turmoil. It is because people in our large cities are working day in and day out just to survive. It is impacting on people's health.

We now know that precarious work adds incredible stress to the body. We have not calculated the health care costs of ripping the support from under workers today. I do not see that calculation in this.

We have not seen the government actually focus any attention on youth employment. The other day, the minister said, in answer to a question on precarious work, that if young workers have a problem in their workplaces, they should complain to the various tribunals out there. They are putting the onus on young people who, right now in Ontario, for example, are graduating, on average, with about \$37,000 of debt. Then they are being welcomed into a workforce where they are either offered jobs that do not pay any money, as interns, or piecemeal jobs. They cannot get into the fields they studied for. The other day the minister said that they could blow the whistle on their companies if they feel that they are being treated poorly.

We are failing young workers. The government has utterly failed to address some of the key issues that affect urban workers. The fact is that too many people cannot access a workplace pension. Too many of us cannot access any kind of workplace benefit, and there is absolutely no job security for urban workers. All the bill does is make it worse.

The member from Mississauga talked about key tax cuts that would reap benefits for all Canadians, but what we are seeing in reality is that the tools the government uses to deal with the economic issues have just made things worse.

Bill C-4 is the fourth attempt in two years by the Conservatives to evade scrutiny by parliamentarians and the public. Canadians are watching. They want to see the government and this place function the way it is supposed to, which is with proper scrutiny. This side of the House, the official opposition, is doing its job. We would like to see the Conservatives start to do theirs.

● (1800)

Mrs. Stella Ambler (Mississauga South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the member for Davenport specifically about jobs.

Does the member know that of those million jobs, roughly 90% are full time and that these are jobs created not by government but by individuals who run their own businesses and understand the importance of creating jobs?

Private Members' Business

I understand that good wages are important, but I also understand that at some point, you have to have that job and be able to move up. It is about having a job and then supporting your family. I want to know what the member's plan is to make it better that we are not doing. What would he do differently?

Mr. Andrew Cash: Mr. Speaker, it is no secret that the first priority of our plan is to get rid of the Conservative government. That is the first step.

To the member's point, people come into my office who are working full time through a temp agency. Do you know how much they are making? They are bringing home \$8.00 an hour. One cannot live on that.

If you want to talk about full-time jobs, come to Davenport and talk to people who are working in temp agencies and find out whether you can live on \$8.00 an hour. Come to Davenport.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): I would remind hon. members to direct their comments and questions through the Chair.

The hon. member for Davenport, should he wish it, will have two minutes remaining in the period for questions and comments when the House next resumes debate on the question.

It being 6:04 p.m., the House will proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*Translation*]

DISABILITY TAX CREDIT PROMOTERS RESTRICTIONS ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-462, An Act restricting the fees charged by promoters of the disability tax credit and making consequential amendments to the Tax Court of Canada Act, as reported (with amendment) from the committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): 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.

• (1805)

[*English*]

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC) moved that the bill be concurred in.

(Motion agreed to)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): When shall the bill be read the third time? By leave, now?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

She said: Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to once again outline the necessity and the benefits of the disability tax credit promoters restrictions act, a crucial step toward ensuring the fair treatment of all Canadian taxpayers. It is vitally important that we see Bill C-462 through to completion as quickly as possible so that

we can better protect disabled Canadians from the predatory practices of some disability tax credit promoters.

I also wanted to say how extremely proud I am that this act has achieved such widespread support from parliamentarians and from the many Canadians who appeared before the Standing Committee on Finance, which held public hearings regarding this legislation.

The fact that my bill has the support of all parties reinforces something that all members of Parliament recognize. We must take action to solve the problems caused by those individuals who seem willing to take advantage of Canadians with disabilities. Whatever our political affiliation, we realize that Canadians living with disabilities face exceptional challenges. We understand that the last thing they need is to see an important source of additional income reduced by tax promoters who would profit from these very challenges.

Of course, I am not suggesting that all of these businesses deserve such hard criticism. This legislation is not directed toward legitimate tax practitioners who provide a valuable service. Make no mistake; this bill is all about going after those whose intentions are not so honourable.

Before highlighting the important improvements we propose to make, let me remind the House of the purpose of the disability tax credit. It is meant to assist Canadians if they are unable to perform one or more of the basic activities of daily living, not occasionally, but all of the time or substantially all of the time, even with therapy and the use of devices and medication. The restriction must be expected to last continuously for at least 12 months and must be present at least 90% of the time. The kind of basic activities of daily living I am referring to include things like speaking, hearing, and feeding oneself.

The disability tax credit is meant to help offset some of the additional costs people incur to enable them to perform these everyday functions. Based on 2012 numbers, the federal tax savings for someone eligible for the disability tax credit was up to \$1,132 for adults and as much \$1,792 for children under the age of 18 or for a family member supporting the person.

It is important that Canadians living with a disability have access to all the support they need. When taxpayers apply and qualify retroactively, they can receive anywhere from \$10,000 to \$15,000. This represents a significant amount of money. It is important to ensure that these funds remain exactly where they belong, in the pockets of Canadians living with severe disabilities.

The significant sums of money involved created an incentive for a new class of third-party promoters to assist Canadians with disabilities with their claims. These higher numbers spawned a whole new industry of disability tax promoters. These businesses help people fill out just the first part of the tax form to qualify for the disability tax credit, often at a very steep price. We have seen some inordinately high fees charged to people who use tax promoters' help to qualify for the tax credit.

Private Members' Business

●(1810)

There have been cases of Canadians with disabilities being charged as much as 35% to 40% of the total amount they were due. That can add up to thousands of dollars for something that is really quite simple to do. Let us remember that these businesses generally just complete part A of the disability tax credit application form, a fairly straightforward process; the more important section of the application form, part B, must be completed by medical practitioners before a claim can be processed.

I first became suspicious about all of this a few years ago when I came across a tax credit promoter who told me he had spent \$25,000 booking space, a hotel, and media coverage in my riding. Obviously, with an investment like that he was expecting to make a very healthy profit.

The high cost of completing just the initial step in an application is one that Canadians living with disabilities can ill afford. People who face extra costs for the supports and services they require for daily living sometimes end up with as little as 60% of the total amount of the disability tax credit that they are entitled to receive; the rest goes into the promoter's pockets.

Until now promoters have been able to get away with an unreasonable share of this money, as there are currently no regulations or restrictions to stop them, but I am proud to say that will stop with the passage of the disability tax credit promoters restriction act. As its name implies, its purpose is to put restrictions in place to make sure that the money stays in the pockets of Canadians who really need it, not tax promoters.

This legislation earned the praise and support of many who appeared before the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance, most notably members from the medical community. We have been told by medical professionals that they at times have felt pressure from promoters to fill out forms fraudulently. We even heard that some promoters employ in-house medical practitioners to sign the medical portion of the disability tax credit application, perhaps having met only once with the applicant and having no prior knowledge of the person's medical history.

Dr. Gail Beck, a member of the board of directors of the Canadian Medical Association, told committee that:

...the Canadian Medical Association is pleased that this bill is being prioritized by the House of Commons. This is an important step toward addressing the unintended consequences that have emerged with the disability tax credit...

Dr. Beck went on to say that the Canadian Medical Association has been concerned for some time about the unintended consequences of the changes that were made to the disability tax credit in 2005. She said:

These consequences include fraudulent claims and tampering of forms by third parties, and they have resulted in an increase in the quantity of forms, which, to quote one of my colleagues, contributes to an avalanche of forms in physicians' offices like their own. In some cases, these third parties have even placed physicians in an adversarial position with their patients.

We are pleased that this bill attempts to address the concerns that we have raised.

Dr. Beck was not alone. Dr. Karen Cohen, chief executive officer of the Canadian Psychological Association, told the committee that:

The Canadian Psychological Association supports this bill because excessive fees charged by promoters should be restricted, especially when they too may involve any misunderstanding of eligibility.

Particularly important to me was the testimony of Carmela Hutchison, president of the DisAbled Women's Network of Canada and a member-at-large of the executive committee of the Council of Canadians with Disabilities. She is someone who knows far better than most of us just how much this legislation is needed.

●(1815)

Ms. Hutchison said:

[Both organizations] support the intent of Bill C-462 and agree that people with disabilities should have their rightful entitlement protected from unfair fees charged by financial promoters. Disability tax credit eligibility is a critical issue for people with disabilities, as it has become the gate for determining eligibility for a variety of benefits. Thus, we must ensure unencumbered and fair access.

That message applies to all parliamentarians, who need to lend their support to this legislation. When Bill C-462 becomes law, Canadians with disabilities who choose to use a promoter's services to apply for the disability tax credit will pay a reasonable fee for those services.

The proposed bill would restrict the fees that can be charged or accepted by businesses that request a determination of eligibility for Canadians with disabilities to receive the tax credit. Public consultations would be carried out to assess just what appropriate maximum fees should be, given the value of the services provided.

Once that fee is determined, the legislation would prohibit charging more than the established amount. The disability tax credit promoters restrictions bill would also require promoters to notify the Canada Revenue Agency if more than the maximum fee were charged. A penalty of \$1,000 would apply if that limit were exceeded. A promoter failing to notify the CRA when an excess fee was charged would be guilty of an offence and liable to an additional \$1,000 to \$25,000 fine.

Another important element of this bill is its benefit for caregivers of people living with severe disabilities. The bill would decrease the cost of applying for the disability tax credit, freeing up more money for better care for their loved ones.

Clearly there are numerous compelling reasons to support the swift passage of this legislation. Bill C-462 would allow us to set new and necessary limits on the fees promoters can charge Canadians with disabilities, and it would provide better oversight of the industry. Let us get on with it.

I am calling on all parties to lend their stamp of approval to the disability tax credit promoters restrictions bill. Canadians with disabilities all across the country are counting on us to do exactly that.

Private Members' Business

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have already discussed the matter in the Standing Committee on Finance, of which I am a member. We did in fact hear interesting evidence from people in the medical field, particularly some who work with persons with disabilities. We also heard evidence from someone who represented the consultants on the tax credit for persons with disabilities.

A number of amendments were proposed by the Conservative Party, and we supported them. The NDP is in fact going to support the bill and the amendments that were proposed.

However, we do have a number of concerns, which we raised in committee. I would like to take this opportunity to present them once more. There is the question of the ability to complete these forms oneself. The complexity of the process means that such consultants are needed or that some persons with disabilities feel a need to consult experts.

Clearly, the Conservative cutbacks at the Canada Revenue Agency, particularly the closing of its service counters, will make it difficult or impossible for people to obtain information and manage without help from such consultants.

I would like to hear the reaction of the member who introduced the bill, to know if it would be possible for the government to make changes within the Canada Revenue Agency to make things easier for those who apply for the tax credit on their own.

• (1820)

[English]

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, with this bill we recognize that some Canadians living with disabilities do need assistance in completing these forms, which is why we are trying to implement some restrictions so that those who genuinely need the help will get it and the promoters will receive a reasonable fee.

For those more complicated cases that involve more time, it would be a graduated system. That is why the consultations will occur: to ensure that the more intensive applications and the time-consuming applications will provide for appropriate compensation.

[Translation]

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for introducing this bill. The reason why I will personally support it is that it will enable us to crack down on certain abuses.

Unfortunately, what my colleague does not mention—and she supports this—is the radical service cuts at the Canada Revenue Agency, cuts that we have seen in Quebec City, where people are now facing closed doors and are unable to obtain services from a public servant. This turns people toward professional services, which they unfortunately have to pay for.

I would like my colleague to tell me why she supports these radical service cuts and this complete lack of customer service at the Canada Revenue Agency.

[English]

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank both colleagues who have asked me questions for stating their intention to support this bill.

In terms of helping people fill out forms, the medical profession has to fill out part B. In some instances, part A is difficult, especially depending on the specific disability that a person may have. I know that through their constituency offices, many members in this House assist people in filling out the first part of the form and assist in having it processed through CRA. Just as there are constituency workers doing this, there are also volunteers in the community, and the first step, which is making people aware that this disability tax credit is available to them, is the most important step of all.

[Translation]

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise and to note the good intentions and the gesture of the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke.

It is indeed very important to combat abuses by sleazy promoters who try to take advantage of vulnerable people in our society.

However, further to the question I asked the member, I must condemn in this House the radical measures the Conservative government has taken. Those measures strip vulnerable and disadvantaged people of all the resources that would enable them to do their duty as taxpayers. This is something quite basic.

As a member and a Canadian citizen, I believe that my duty as a taxpayer should be as easy to do as my duty as a voter. This is a civic action. It is an action that the Canadian government must actively support. In the case of our fiscal duty, it is also an action that is being impeded, denied and even flouted. In fact, it is being flouted and suppressed. This discourages a lot of people and leaves them at a loss with respect to the government and to their place in society and the contribution they can make to it.

I am going to talk about a personal case. In fact, I am going to recall a childhood memory. I am going to talk about my father, Étienne Côté, who was a carpenter and cabinetmaker and a union activist for more than 10 years. He also filed his tax returns and maintained his own car. He liked to do mechanical work and solve all kinds of problems.

I must say that I inherited some of my father's character traits. He taught me a lot of things. I started completing my own tax returns as a teenager, and I have continued to exercise that discipline. Somehow or other, I have always completed my own federal and provincial income tax returns—Quebec is a special case in that regard—despite the increasingly complex nature of the forms people have to fill out.

Consequently, for nearly 30 years, I have been a privileged witness to this growing complexity and the fact that people are increasingly at a loss with regard to it all. This year, I am completing income tax returns for other people who feel completely overwhelmed. That is not right.

I want to talk about what the bill does not address, without taking anything away from my colleague's very positive gesture.

Private Members' Business

Completely cutting all the services that the Canada Revenue Agency provides to taxpayers is a radical action.

This summer, while I was going door to door, I talked to some Canada Revenue Agency employees who told me that people are needlessly going to the federal building on Rue d'Estimauville, where they are told that there is no service counter on site. Then they have to go back home and surf the Internet or, at worst, try to reach a public servant by telephone, which is virtually impossible, from what they told me.

I do not use those services. I have the good fortune and great privilege to understand a number of the finer points of taxation, although I admit I have been stumped in the past by its absolutely incredible complexity, which is intolerable in our society.

This is a very serious problem. When we talk about the disability tax credit, we are talking about a tax credit that grants very large amounts of money every year.

Like my colleague from Burnaby—New Westminster, who has been doing this for several years, I organized an information session on those credits.

• (1825)

Some people were able to collect thousands of dollars in arrears, going back as many as 10 years. Some of my colleagues told me there had been refunds of \$13,000 to \$14,000 going back 10 years, because people had unfortunately been unable to declare their own incomes and fully exercise a right granted by law. That right is being denied them because filing an income tax return has become a virtually impenetrable exercise.

We are not just talking about personal returns, but about corporate returns as well. Corporate taxation is also an enormous challenge because there are a lot of loopholes and vote-getting measures. Those measures add an incredible number of lines to the income tax return form, not to mention the additional pages needed so that you can use a specific line.

It is not surprising, after what I have recently learned, that fewer than 40% of Canadian taxpayers successfully navigate their income tax return, do their duty and get the credits to which they are entitled.

Let us imagine someone who is already debilitated by illness, by physical disability following an accident or by advanced age and who can benefit from this fabulous disability tax credit. Then let us imagine him trying to find information in that thick document that explains the multi-page return. You could very easily miss it, especially since people do not readily understand the scope and the limits of the tax credit, or which field covers the whole thing.

The tax credit is remarkable, as it affects a great number of people. However, many people simply do not know whether they qualify for it.

While I welcome my colleague's attempt to curb the frankly criminal abuses of the situation by certain people in our society, the government is systematically refusing to deal with the growing complexity of the federal tax system and the basic need for simplification. In fact, the reverse is true; in the past eight years, the government has contributed significantly to this increased complex-

ity by bringing in many different tax credits that are designed to win votes.

I am thinking for instance of the transit tax credit, which every week gives back less than a handful of quarters and makes absolutely no contribution to improving public transit in our cities and municipalities. I can attest to this myself, as a resident of Quebec City.

I am going to repeat what is probably the most shocking aspect of this debate: very quickly and very dramatically, the Canada Revenue Agency's client services have been slashed. I will never be able to say often enough that these cuts are weakening the social fabric and impeding people's right to do their duty in the right conditions, without making errors in good faith and possibly being criticized for it. We must continue paying particular attention to this.

• (1830)

[English]

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to speak to Bill C-462. The purpose, obviously, is to restrict the level of fees that can be charged by promoters of the disability tax credit.

Since 2005, disabled Canadians have been able to claim this credit retroactively for up to 10 years, which can result in significant lump sum payments. Reports of consultants exploiting disabled Canadians and charging exorbitant and in some cases extortionate contingency fees in connection with these large, retroactive claims provide some of the reasoning behind the bill. Disabled Canadians ought to be protected from exploitation, clearly. Consultants who abuse the system and commit fraud ought to be punished under the law, so I support the intent of the bill.

I do have some reservations. My biggest concern is that the legislation may have identified the wrong problem, because while the bill establishes the need for introducing penalties against fraudulent consultants and protection for those exploited, a key question ought to be asked. Why do these consultants exist in the first place? It could be argued that the reason they exist is that there is a need created by an application process that is too complex, and that governments have failed to provide disabled Canadians with the resources they need to fill out the forms themselves. This is also in the context of times when we are cutting government and front-line services, which could actually help disabled Canadians complete these forms.

If the government is serious about helping disabled Canadians and stopping the alleged proliferation of these consultants, it ought to simplify the disability tax credit application process, and hire and train government workers in sufficient quantity and with sufficient expertise to help Canadians who have questions and need help with this process. This way more disabled Canadians who are entitled to these benefits would be able to fill out the forms themselves, and that would eradicate the need for these consultants in the first place.

The legislation in its current format does not address this central point, so I emphasize that I support the intent of Bill C-462 and recognize the importance of protecting innocent Canadian citizens from exploitation by consultants who abuse the system and charge usurious fees for their services.

Private Members' Business

I will outline a few of my reservations. First and foremost, there is a lack of information and detail within Bill C-462, and that is quite often the situation with private members' bills. Private members do not have the same kind of legislative or research capacity in working to develop legislation that, for instance, governments have.

However, the legislation in its current format does not specify what the maximum fees would be or how they would be set. That would be defined, perhaps, in the other place or perhaps in the regulatory process. Surely this ought to be a key element of the legislation as the aim is to restrict fees.

This vacuum of information leaves a number of questions unanswered and potential unintended consequences. For instance, how does the government propose to measure the fees? What services would be covered? What services would fall outside of the maximum fee structure? Would the maximum fee be set as a percentage of the tax credit or as a percentage of the tax refund, or would the maximum be set in absolute terms? Is the maximum to be set as a percentage of the tax benefit? How many years would be factored in or count towards that maximum? Would it be just the year of the application or would the government consider the value of the benefit over a number of years, for instance, the net present value of that future revenue stream? In setting the maximum fee, would the government differentiate between different applications, such as whether they are complicated, time-consuming or taken to appeals? If so, how would the government make that differentiation?

• (1835)

With some applicants claiming retroactively for up to 10 years, there could be complications within their application. The maximum fees set out in the regulations ought to reflect the complexity of the case in hand. The industry may be too complicated for a one-size-fits-all policy and the maximum fee structure ought to be set in an open and transparent process with a broad range of stakeholders.

Second, qualifying for the disability tax credit also qualifies people for other programs such as the registered disability savings program. Once they receive a disability tax credit certificate, they can remain eligible for the tax credit for several years. Therefore, the maximum fee structure that only considers the value of the refund for one year may not reflect the actual value that the applicant places on qualifying for the additional disability tax credit certificate.

For this point, let me illustrate with one potential example. Let us consider the amount of a disability tax credit in 2013 for an adult. That would be 15% of \$7,546, which would be \$1,131.90. Therefore, if the government is not willing to simplify the complex application process for disabled Canadians, some will continue to depend on the expertise of consultants. If the 5% fee cap is introduced, as has been suggested, the maximum amount a disabled Canadian could pay for expertise in applying for the tax credit could be as little as \$56.60. However, the real reason the applicant may want to qualify for the disability tax credit is to be eligible for tens of thousands of dollars in RDSP bonds and matching grants from the government. Regardless of the amount people are likely to receive from just this one disability tax refund, some will take their claim to the appeals process in order to gain access to all these other programs and benefits.

Poor regulations that could flow potentially from Bill C-462, regulations that would have a narrow view of the tax credit, could have some unintended consequences, for instance, of preventing disabled Canadians the help they need to access government programs. We should acknowledge that there are businesses which provide very legitimate and valuable services to help disabled Canadians access these programs. I have heard from some of these types of operators who have certainly convinced me that what they are doing is legitimate and they are concerned that potential unintended consequences could render their businesses unprofitable if we did not consider some of their concerns in the design of this legislation. Again, I believe these are legitimate businesses.

The regulations under Bill C-462 must ensure that these legitimate businesses remain financially viable under this model. We must not punish these legitimate businesses because of the exploitative actions of some of the other operators who are taking advantage of this system.

One of the key reasons for the hiring of consultants, again, is the complex application process, which leads me to a point that right now the process is so complex that some Canadians feel like the only option available to them is to hire a consultant to guide them through. Therefore, we ought to make it easier for legitimate applicants to access the program themselves. After all, it is a program to which they ought to be entitled and, as such, why should they need an outside consultant simply to deal with their own government and access a program for which they qualify? The government should streamline the application process. It should hire and train more government workers who can answer the questions and help disabled Canadians apply for these credits themselves.

This is not just an issue of disabled Canadians and their interface with government. We have gone toward more automation, less personal interaction, less individually tailored services for Canadians dealing with their government and this is something we have to consider for seniors and for disabled Canadians.

• (1840)

In summary, we agree that disabled Canadians need to be protected from exploitation, but we also believe that there are other things the government could do through simplifying the process and ensuring that we have front-line public servants who are providing these services and helping disabled Canadians interface with the government and access the programs not only to which they are entitled, but the programs they need.

Mr. Gordon Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise this evening. I welcome the chance to add my voice in support of this commendable legislation. Bill C-462 builds on our government's strong record of supporting the full and equal involvement of those with disabilities in every aspect of Canadian society.

Private Members' Business

As the House knows, we work to ensure that our legislation, policies, programs and services are inclusive of people with disabilities and that they fully respect their rights and interests. The Government of Canada provides a variety of services and financial benefits to assist people with disabilities and their families to make this goal a reality.

For example, our government offers a range of generous tax credits and benefits for Canadians with disabilities. These important measures are among the many ways we are advancing our government's plan for jobs, growth and long-term prosperity that is working for Canadians, even as they face challenging times. We also strive to promote positive attitudes and raise awareness of the needs of Canadians with disabilities in order to prevent unintended negative outcomes. The House need look no further than Bill C-462 for the evidence of that.

When the hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke discovered that some of her constituents with disabilities were being charged excessive fees by tax promoters to apply for the disability tax credit, she took action to put a stop to this abusive practice. It is thanks to her perseverance and diligence that we have this legislation before us today.

As parliamentarians know, the disability tax credit is a non-refundable tax credit. It reduces the amount of income tax that either individuals with disabilities or those who support them have to pay. It may help compensate for the cost of additional expenses, such as special equipment, medications and treatments. Eligibility is not based on the diagnosis of any specific medical condition, but is based on the effects of the conditions on an individual over a prolonged period of time.

To be eligible for the tax credit, the person must have a severe and prolonged impairment in physical or mental functions. It must restrict the person in one or more of the basic activities of daily life or cause the person to take an inordinate amount of time to perform the activity, even with the appropriate therapy, medication and devices. This needs to be verified by a qualified practitioner, medical doctor, optometrist, audiologist, occupational therapist, psychologist, physiotherapist or speech-language pathologist.

Hundreds of thousands of Canadians with disabilities and their family members who care for them count on the disability tax credit to help them improve their standard of living and quality of life. The CRA receives an average of 200,000 new disability tax credit applications each year. It is estimated that approximately 9,000 of these requests are received from taxpayers who use the service of a disability tax credit promoter.

In too many cases, the people who really need this tax credit do not get their fair share of the eventual tax refund. The problem is not with the tax credit, as others have explained. The issue is that there are some private sector companies that appear to have no compunction about cashing in on this tax benefit, which is intended for Canadians with disabilities, for their own benefit. There have been numerous cases brought to our attention in which promoters have charged 30% to 40% of the amount of the person's income tax refund. We are talking about thousands of dollars in fees for something that is very simple to do.

These businesses generally just complete part A of the disability tax credit application form, a straightforward process that usually takes little time. Aside from being reprehensible, this is first and foremost unnecessary. If someone with a disability or a family member providing care needs extra help completing the forms, the Canada Revenue Agency has agents who specialize in this disability tax credit. We have heard from others that this is not the case but, in fact, it is. They are just a phone call away and can assist both taxpayers and qualified practitioners by providing information on both the criteria and the application process.

There is simply no reason for people who really need and rely on the tax credit to give up a large percentage of it to a third party tax promoter who expects a large of the eventual tax return. With this bill, we are sending a clear signal that the price Canadians with disabilities pay for this service should reflect the real value of the services they receive.

● (1845)

Once it receives royal assent, Bill C-462 would restrict the amount of fees that can be charged or accepted by businesses that request a determination of disability tax credit eligibility on behalf of someone with a disability. This legislation would prohibit firms from charging or accepting more than an established maximum fee.

What that fee would be would only be determined following consultations. To discourage companies from overcharging their clients, the bill would also require businesses to notify the CRA of any fee charged in excess of the maximum amount permitted. If they persisted, they would face fines of \$1,000 to \$25,000 for not notifying the CRA or for any false or deceptive statements. A separate fine equal to 100% or 200% of the excess fees could also be applied in addition to the penalty. Such fines would be applied in serious cases, such as repeat offenders.

Members should not get me wrong: we are not trying to interfere with the free market and we have no intention of hurting legitimate businesses that charge reasonable amounts consistent with the value of the services that they provide. Our goal is simply to ensure that when Canadians with disabilities are eligible for the tax credit, especially if their claims go back many years, they receive the maximum amount that is due to them. This is consistent with our government's approach to ensuring that Canadians with disabilities are treated fairly, equitably, and with the dignity they deserve.

This legislation is a clear demonstration of our determination to support the full and equal involvement of those with disabilities in every aspect of Canadian life. I am sure no member of the House would argue with that aspiration.

Therefore, I urge all parties to lend their support to Bill C-462 so that we can take this legislation through its final stage and make it the law of the land. Members can be sure that people with disabilities in their ridings will thank them if they do.

Private Members' Business

• (1850)

Mr. Tyrone Benskin (Jeanne-Le Ber, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to Bill C-462. From the outset, I would say that I support the bill put forward by my hon. colleague, which aims to cap the amount of fees an individual, an organization, or a company can charge people who are claiming or using the instrument of the disability tax credit.

The tax codes, the fiscal pages that govern this country, are large and many. One cannot blame individuals who feel that they need a hand in deciphering some of that information in order to use the various instruments and tools available to them to maximize their tax dollars and maximize their ability to make ends meet, especially in the case of people who are living with disabilities and the families that care for them.

The disability tax credit works for Canadians. It is something that, unfortunately, too many Canadians do not know enough about.

The only issue I have with Bill C-462 is that it does not go far enough in identifying and fixing some of the problems that lead to this need for disability tax credit promoters or agents. We need to take a look at that.

We all try to do the best we can for families. The people who stand in this House and work every day for their constituents are here because they believe in working for their constituents. In February, for example, I held a forum in my riding to give my constituents the information and tools necessary to apply for the disability tax credit. My colleague from Burnaby—New Westminster came and lent his expertise to the discussion. I had a very good turnout for that forum. As a result, I received word that a number of individuals who attended were able to apply for the disability tax credit and were eligible for some sizeable amounts of money retroactively due to that information.

That takes me to the crux of my discussion, which is that we, as the government and members of this House, need to put more emphasis and more energy into informing individuals about the need for promoters and agents who claim to be there to help individuals navigate the pages of the disability tax credit. I am sure that many are legitimate and are there to legitimately help individuals. However, as in every situation, a few bad apples give the practice a bad name. The need for these agents is the question I have. Why is it that the government, we as members of Parliament, are not giving our constituents the information they need to apply for those disability tax credits?

During the course of the months following the forum I gave, individuals would call my office, and my staff were able to help them fill out some of the forms or point them in the right direction as to what they should be doing. This is something I think is lacking with respect to this bill. It is one thing to say that we will cap the fees and that agents or promoters who violate those caps would be in trouble. It is another to provide the means, the opportunity, and the information Canadians need to not have to avail themselves of promoters and/or agents in this area of disability tax credits.

• (1855)

The other side of that is the cuts. Even though the government is claiming that the cuts to the CRA services available to Canadians to

get the help they need are not affecting Canadians, is not true. Canadians are having a harder time getting in touch with the agencies to be able to get the information that they need, to navigate the pages, be it the tax act, employment insurance, Service Canada, Canada Revenue Agency. Canadians are having a harder time getting that type of information. It creates a false need for these promoters and agents, particularly in the disability tax area.

This opens the door to people charging exorbitant amounts for their services, as was said in the House previously. Some 30% to 40% of the monies that are due end up going to certain types of promoters and certain types of agents. It behooves us as members of the House and as the government to make sure that Canadians have the information that they need in terms of instruments such as the disability tax credit, so they do not have to lean on outside or private interests to help them.

I stand in support of the heart and soul of the bill, but I take issue with the fact that the maximum amounts were not identified at committee. Will the government let the legitimate members of the community who are out there trying to help people make the best of the disability tax credits know? How will they know what those caps are? How will they know if they are crossing the line? On the other side of that coin, how will people who are claiming disability tax credits and looking for the help of these agents and promoters know what their rights are in terms of what can be charged to them?

Again, I stand in support of the bill and it is a step in the right direction in regard to protecting consumers from opportunistic individuals or organizations, but it can go a little further. It begs the question, what more can we do as the government? What more can we do as members of Parliament to make sure that our constituents and Canadians know what their rights are and know how to access instruments such as the disability tax credit?

I will use my last 30 seconds to thank the Speaker for his ear. It is a pleasure to stand in the House and speak to a bill such as this.

• (1900)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Before we resume debate, I will let the hon. member for Mississauga South know that there are about four minutes remaining in the time provided for private members' business. Of course, she will have the remaining time when the House next resumes debate on the question.

The hon. member for Mississauga South.

Mrs. Stella Ambler (Mississauga South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to stand behind my hon. colleague's private member's bill.

The member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke has performed a valuable public service by drawing attention to the dubious business practices of some tax promoters, people who would take anywhere from 20% to 40% of the disability tax credit for which someone with a severe disability, individuals facing serious health challenges who need our financial support, has qualified.

Adjournment Proceedings

The legislation is not only a tribute to her but to all parliamentarians who have recognized its merits and enabled the legislation to move quickly through the approval process. We must now take it to the next step and make sure that Bill C-462 becomes law, because all Canadians, including those with disabilities, expect us as their duly elected representatives to defend their interests. As the disability tax credit promoters restrictions bill makes clear, Canadians with disabilities applying for the tax credit are not always treated fairly at the moment.

In recent years, the Canada Revenue Agency has witnessed a growing number of businesses promoting their services to individuals with disabilities and their families who want to apply for the disability tax credit. Some of these businesses are focused almost solely on completing the application form. These companies normally provide their services on a contingency fee basis, and those fees can run up to 40% of the amount of the individual's income tax refund.

Parliament brought in this tax credit, recognizing that Canadians with disabilities can face serious challenges and exceptional expenses for which they should receive tax relief. The tax savings can make a meaningful difference in their quality of life. It is appalling that roughly \$20 million a year, earmarked for people with disabilities, instead ends up in the pockets of the private sector tax promoters who helped them to prepare these claims.

By any calculation that is a lot of money to complete part A of an application form to obtain the disability tax credit certificate, something that the person applying for the credit or someone in his or her family can generally do without assistance. The CRA has put all of the forms and instructions on how to complete them on its website. They have a call centre that will help, and similarly constituency offices such as mine are only too happy to help guide people to the right resources, free of charge.

I would love to say more because I know this is a great bill. We are all very concerned about it. It is clear why it has been unanimously supported in the House. It is just simply a good bill.

Let me be clear, the legislation is not an attempt to crack down on people who are legitimately claiming the credit nor is it an attempt to deny anyone's claims. Let me be equally clear that our goal is not to hinder legitimate businesses. Most do good tax preparation work and are charging reasonable fees. Bill C-462 would apply only to those who try to take advantage of Canadians with disabilities by taking an unreasonable cut. With Parliament's endorsement, we can ensure that the disability tax credit goes to the person for whom it was intended.

I trust that we can count on all parties' support to pass this necessary legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The hon. member for Mississauga South will have six and a half minutes remaining in the time for her remarks when the House next resumes debate on the question.

The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

●(1905)

[English]

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, earlier this week I asked the minister a question about whether or not the government would respect its duty to consult, and it was in the context of the comments by the UN aboriginal envoy, Mr. Anaya, on a number of issues. In particular I want to highlight the issues around the first nation education act.

In Mr. Anaya's statement, he said:

...I have heard remarkably consistent and profound distrust toward the First Nations Education Act being developed by the federal government, and in particular deep concerns that the process for developing the Act has not appropriately included nor responded to aboriginal views. In light of this, I urge the Government not to rush forward with this legislation, but to re-initiate discussions with aboriginal leaders to develop a process, and ultimately a bill, that addresses aboriginal concerns and incorporates aboriginal viewpoints....

I have heard from many people since the government released its draft of the first nation education act. One person who wrote me talked about seven tests for the first nation education act. I will not have time to go through all of them, but there are a couple of points I think are important.

The first test is this: does it guarantee actual funding allocations, or leave it to the discretion of the department?

The second test is this: does it guarantee needs-based funding or equity to provincial schools?

The third test is whether this is real first nations control of education, or will the federal government maintain oversight?

The fourth test is this: will this act enable the full expression of first nations languages and cultures in first nation schools?

There are a number of other important tests as well.

I raise this point because the government itself commissioned a report called "Nurturing the Learning Spirit of First Nation Students". There was not agreement on every point in that report, but there are a couple of pieces I want to highlight in the context of duty to consult.

The report outlined an important principle when it said:

First Nation Education Reform must be undertaken in the spirit of reconciliation and collaboration among First Nations, the Government of Canada, and provincial and territorial governments.

There were a number of recommendations made, and I want to touch on two of them.

The report said:

A strong First Nation Education System would be built upon a solid foundation that encompasses the following:

The co-creation of legislation in the form of a First Nation Education Act that outlines responsibilities for each partner in the system and recognizes and protects the First Nation child's right to their culture, language and identity, a quality education, funding of the system, and First Nation control of First Nation education

The other important recommendation, of course, was:

Statutory funding that is needs-based, predictable, sustainable and used specifically for education purposes

In the context of a report that was commissioned by the government and an interim statement by the special envoy, Mr. Anaya, on the need for meaningful consultation—and one can read “accommodation” into that—I want to reiterate my question to the parliamentary secretary: will the government heed the word of the UN special rapporteur and respect its duty to consult?

Mr. Mark Strahl (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak to the question of the hon. member for Nanaimo—Cowichan, a fellow British Columbian and someone who is concerned about aboriginal peoples in Canada.

This is my first opportunity to participate in adjournment proceedings and I am glad you are in the chair for that experience too, Mr. Speaker.

Our government was pleased to have had the opportunity to meet the United Nations special rapporteur during his recent visit to Canada. During his visit, he met with the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and afterward he stated:

It is clear to me that Canada is aware of and concerned about these issues, and that it is taking steps to address them. I have learned about numerous programs, policies and efforts that have been rolled out at the federal and provincial levels, and many of these have achieved notable successes.

In response to that statement the minister said that the social well-being of aboriginals was at the centre of Canada's preoccupations and explained why the government had taken and continued to take effective incremental steps to improve the situation.

Clearly, our government recognizes the challenges faced by many aboriginal people in Canada and that is why we are committed to working collaboratively and creatively on shared priorities and toward moving forward in the spirit of reconciliation on our shared goal with first nations to create the conditions for healthier, more self-sufficient first nations communities and our first nations education act consultations fall into that category.

We are happy that the UN special rapporteur pointed to the numerous efforts our government had taken to address treaty and aboriginal claims as well as to encourage jobs, economic growth and long-term prosperity for Canada's first nations communities.

The special rapporteur's observations in regard to the well-being of aboriginal peoples clearly illustrates where our government has

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taken and continues to take practical and incremental steps to improve the situation in collaboration and consultation with aboriginal peoples.

We acknowledge the special rapporteur's preliminary observations and recommendations and we look forward to his final report. Once we receive the final report of the special rapporteur, our government will review the report and its conclusions and recommendations.

In addition, our government will continue to respect aboriginal and treaty rights by consulting with those aboriginal groups whose rights and related interests may be adversely impacted by any proposed activity.

It was our government that endorsed the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and reaffirmed its commitment to promoting and protecting the rights of indigenous peoples. Our endorsement of the declaration clearly demonstrates our commitment to renew our relationship with aboriginals and to continue to work in partnership to create a better Canada.

Our government has taken considerable steps to address the challenges faced by aboriginals. Since 2006, we have brought in key legislation to improve first nations quality of life, governance and legal protections and we are committed to taking continued action on this front.

● (1910)

Ms. Jean Crowder: Mr. Speaker, I want to welcome the parliamentary secretary to his new role. I look forward to working with him on committee.

I need to also put on the record a couple of pieces here.

Mr. Anaya said, “From all I have learned, I can only conclude that Canada faces a crisis when it comes to the situation of indigenous peoples of the country”. He went on to say that the Canadian government still had a long way to go in narrowing the “well-being gap between aboriginals and non-aboriginals” and he urged the government not to rush forward with the education reform legislation but to re-initiate discussions with aboriginal leaders.

By any test, re-initiating discussions with aboriginal leaders does not solely rely on a website that says “email us your comments”. That is not meaningful consultation.

I want to come back to the government's own report that it commissioned that talked about co-creating legislation. Co-creating legislation means that first nations sit at the table, help develop the process and are there throughout the entire process, right through to the conclusion of developing new legislation.

Again, will the government respect its duty to consult and to accommodate first nations?

Mr. Mark Strahl: Mr. Speaker, our government takes its legal duty to consult and accommodate very seriously. Where appropriate, we have said that we would accommodate aboriginal groups if it has been determined that treaty and aboriginal rights could be impacted.

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I do take issue with the idea that somehow we are rushing forward on first nations education reform. We have consulted widely with first nations right across the country. The minister has put out a proposal for first nations education. He has not committed to introducing it even in the House before he hears from first nations right across the country. He sent that framework to every first nation in the country, to the national chiefs, to the regional chiefs and to the grand chiefs. First nations people right across the country will have an opportunity as will all other interested stakeholders to provide their input, to be consulted and to give us their ideas on what they think should be in a first nations education act.

We know that we need to improve first nations education in Canada and that is something to which our government is certainly committed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:14 p.m.)

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