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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Monday, December 2, 2013

—

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, December 2, 2013

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayers

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1105)

[*English*]

CRIMINAL CODE

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-489, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (restrictions on offenders), as reported (with amendment) from the committee.

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

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC) moved that the bill be concurred in.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed

(Motion agreed to)

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Mark Warawa moved that the bill be read a third time and passed.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleagues in the House today, on this side and the other side. I was quite impressed with the way that the justice committee seriously considered the benefits of Bill C-489, the safe at home bill. I started from the beginning with a willingness to have amendments to strengthen the bill. The committee participated in that, and there were some important amendments that were installed into the bill. Therefore, I want to thank everyone.

Initially, this came to my attention, as I shared with the House, from the story of a mother who came to my office saying her daughter had been sexually assaulted by the neighbour across the street. After six months in jail, the neighbour was able to serve the rest of his sentence at home. It was horrific to hear from witnesses, particularly the family of the victim, of the horrific experience of

having an offender live right across the street from them. They eventually had to move out of that neighbourhood. They just could not take it anymore.

The bill is an important step to deal with this issue of the needs of victims to be able to heal. The courts would retain the important discretion to decide on an appropriate distance. The bill asks for two kilometres, or what the courts would deem as an appropriate distance. The other big improvement with Bill C-489 in our Criminal Code would be with the administrative bodies, Corrections Canada and the National Parole Board. They would then have to carry through with making sure that if the courts deemed a distance was needed, then the distance would need to be maintained throughout the sentence, including after sentencing, through section 810 of the Criminal Code if necessary.

We need to protect the victims and give them a chance to heal. That is what Bill C-489 does. The witnesses we heard at committee unanimously said it is a very good step.

Again, I want to thank the House. I would like to keep my comments short so that debate can collapse in this hour and we can move on to a vote as soon as possible.

The Deputy Speaker: We do have a period of five minutes for questions and comments.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for La Pointe-de-l'Île.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a good thing I was not too late this morning, for I would have missed my chance to ask my colleague a question. I would first like to congratulate him on his bill and on all his efforts. It is always quite the achievement for any member to get the support of the House for his or her bill.

My question for the member is quite simple. It is important to give victims a voice in our justice system. However, this new bill would bring in additional changes, particularly concerning parole and courts of law.

Can my colleague tell us if the government fully understands what is needed in terms of justice and support for victims? Can we expect the government to commit to investing so that the justice system is more accessible to victims, particularly regarding delays?

Private Members' Business

[English]

Mr. Mark Warawa: Mr. Speaker, as the member pointed to, it is important to make sure that victim services are being provided, and ensuring that falls under provincial jurisdiction. Our government is committed to a system that works to protect the rights of victims.

All too often, we have heard in testimony that it is the offender who has court-appointed representation. Then, there is the prosecution. However, the victims are left in the lurch with nobody to help them through the process. They often see themselves as observers to the process.

Therefore, this is a big first step in the right direction to providing protection for the victims. Victims need rights too. Hopefully, we can work as a Parliament to make sure that victims have rights provided to them and that they are no longer observers but participating in the system. Hopefully, the courts will hear their input, and that the impacts of sentencing on them would be considered.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is great to see a higher sense of co-operation and recognition of value and effort, as we saw the bill go through a certain proceeding that normally would have taken a bit longer.

I do have a question. When we talk about victims, all members of Parliament are concerned about the victims. However, as a general rule there is an area of restorative justice that government could move more toward wherever it can. I sat on a youth justice committee, and we found that when victims and perpetrators of a crime sit together there is a higher rate of resolving issues.

Although that would not have been possible in the crime cited by the member that precipitated the legislation, if he would not mind sharing it, I am interested in knowing the member's thoughts on the whole idea of restorative justice.

• (1110)

Mr. Mark Warawa: Mr. Speaker, restorative justice is very important, when used appropriately. Both parties, the victim and the offender, have to be willing to participate. Also, the offender has to take full responsibility for his or her actions and be willing to be accountable for what he or she did.

In this case, when an offender has sexually assaulted a young girl for over two years and is then allowed to serve his sentence at home right across from the victim, it was a revictimization of that victim over and over again.

Could members imagine what it would be like to be the parent of a child who had been sexually assaulted and watching that child go through depression and all kinds of emotional anguish? Could they then imagine realizing that he or she had been sexually assaulted by the neighbour across the street and that the courts had allowed that sentencing to happen? Restorative justice does not work in that case.

[Translation]

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to have the opportunity to speak to this bill today.

I will be using the full 10 minutes that I have. It is not that I do not want to proceed to the vote, but I do believe that it is important to highlight my colleague's hard work. This proves to victims that we

are here to listen to them and that all we want is to be able to help them get through those extremely difficult times.

All too often, a bill's shortcomings emerge only after a family finds itself in a certain situation. In the case of Bill C-489 introduced by my colleague, the shortcomings and problems related to the role of victims in the justice system will become known only after a particular case that will unfortunately reveal the work that still needs to be done and the steps that need to be taken to improve the legislation and enhance the role of victims in our justice system.

If I am not mistaken, the member who introduced Bill C-489 had the idea after meeting with families and people in his riding who went through extremely difficult situations. I commend him for wanting to change things.

I also commend him for listening to these families and making their voices heard in Parliament, because that is why we are here. Parliament is here to give a voice to the people who are too often silenced, people who are not necessarily heard or who feel no one is listening to them. I want to tell them they were very lucky to have elected a member who could speak up for them here. We are very pleased to be able to support his bill.

I would like to give a brief overview of the bill's provisions and the amendments that have been proposed. I think the amendments made the bill even better. There were a few gaps that we were able to address in committee. That is why we are here today and will support Bill C-489.

The bill amends both the Criminal Code and the Corrections and Conditional Release Act.

I will refer to sections and subsections, but since I do not have their precise wording, I apologize in advance for speaking in vague terms. For example, section 161 deals with the prohibition order and conditions that may be imposed by a judge when someone is convicted. Subsection 732.1(2) addresses probation and section 742.3 concerns the conditional sentence order, commonly called house arrest. This can be thought of as an offender serving his or her sentence in the community. Finally, we have subsection 810.1(3.02), which deals with conditions of recognizance.

Since Parliament has not passed the bill yet, it is currently at the discretion of courts to issue one of these four orders. They have complete discretion as to whether to impose or not impose conditions.

Once Bill C-489 is passed and enacted, it will be mandatory to issue one of these orders, except in certain circumstances. Therefore we are still leaving some discretion to the courts and judges, but they will have the obligation to pay closer attention to this aspect and to issue one of these orders.

• (1115)

This provides the courts with some leeway to not impose this condition in exceptional circumstances.

Nonetheless, it is important to show that we want to fill the legislative gaps in order to protect victims and defend their rights without encroaching on the discretion of the courts. This is a good bill because it gives judges the room to justify their decisions. As legislators, we are telling them to take certain conditions into account, except in exceptional circumstances.

Bill C-489 amends the Criminal Code to that effect, and the second part of the bill amends the Corrections and Conditional Release Act in exactly the same way. It tells the courts to impose one of these conditions except in exceptional circumstances.

This bill amends the law and gives the courts and judges the discretion to impose certain conditions or not to do so in exceptional circumstances.

It is very important to mention that this bill came out of a number of situations, but one in particular, which received a lot of media attention. In that situation, a family had to live across the street from the person who assaulted their young daughter. They had to deal with this nightmare day after day. Implementing a mandatory distance measure is what this bill is all about.

When an offender is found guilty of a sexual offence involving a minor, the courts will be required to make an order prohibiting the offender from being within two kilometres of his victim. They will have the discretion to decide whether there are exceptional circumstances making it inappropriate to impose the condition.

I think this is a very important measure. That is why we are passing a bill that defends victims and prevents them from having to deal with extremely difficult situations. We are allowing them to cope with their ordeal in their community without any added stress on their daily lives.

I cannot speak from experience, but I can appreciate how stressful it must be for families who have to live so close their child's attacker. I do not have any children, but I can imagine how I would feel if I did.

This bill helps victims, defends their interests and gives them their rightful place in the justice system, all without unduly restricting the courts. That is what makes this such an excellent bill.

I would like to thank my colleague for bringing the voice of his constituents here to Parliament. However, there is a caveat. It is important that the government invest in our justice system so that victims are given their rightful place. For that to happen, we need funding, we need to lessen the burden and we need to respond to provincial requests.

• (1120)

[English]

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.) Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak on Bill C-489. I would think that all members would support the intent of the legislation in principle, the necessity for those who have been victimized to be assured of some degree of security that the offender will maintain a certain distance from them.

The question that was often raised during discussions of the legislation at committee was whether the legislation, as drafted, was necessary and would withstand a constitutional challenge.

Private Members' Business

We have increasingly seen that the courts are beginning to respond negatively to the blank mandatory minimum sentences that the government has been imposing on virtually any and all offenses.

No one argues that in some cases mandatory minimums are not required. No intelligent person argues, given the current government's use of this practice, that a full review of those sentences should not be conducted.

When the sponsor of the bill was asked in the House during second reading about his consultations prior to the bill's introduction as to whether the amendments proposed in the bill would meet a court challenge related to the charter, the member indicated that he had consulted, but he provided no evidence as to whom he had consulted. That I did find troubling.

Changes to public policy, and especially changes to the Criminal Code, should be done to meet a specific and widely held need. This is national legislation that would impact all Canadians. It is not a bylaw in a community or one that might apply to a specific part of a small community. It is the Criminal Code of Canada, and amendments to it should be based on evidence and due diligence.

In that regard, I would put on the record the following exchange. It does not minimize the impact of criminal activity on any individual but places in context the wider concern, which may not exist, according to the member who proposed this legislation.

On November 5, 2013, the following question was posed to the member:

Do you have any numbers on how many people who would be impacted by this bill specifically have found themselves in a situation of having the offender within two miles of their residence?

The answer from the member for Langley was "no".

Again, the intent of the bill is worthy of support, but what remains troubling is that no evidence as to the extent of the problem is apparently available, and it should be.

Extending from these issues is that the bill itself was subject to a number of amendments in key areas that were of concern to members and witnesses. As a case in point, the bill in its original form mandated that an offender could not reside within two kilometres of the victim and that there would be a requirement that the offender be obligated to have knowledge of the residency of the victim or where the victim could be present.

When asked how the two kilometres was reached, the member indicated that his intent had originally been to set it at five kilometres, and it was reduced to two kilometres to take into account smaller community situations. However, the two kilometres appears now to have been arbitrarily set, the same way five kilometres was. The bill has now been amended in regard to both provisions.

On strict adherence to the two kilometres, government members, on behalf of the government, eliminated the mandatory two-kilometre restriction, allowing judges the discretion, which they currently have under the Criminal Code, to allow, and I will quote the member for Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe at committee, who moved the amendment, "the courts to impose greater or lesser geographic restriction where it is reasonable to do so".

Private Members' Business

• (1130)

Mr. Robert Goguen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in the debate on private member's Bill C-489, an act to amend the Criminal Code and the Corrections and Conditional Release Act with regard to restrictions on offenders.

On the comments of the previous speaker, the member for Malpeque, I am pleased to say that in the House, perfection is never the enemy of the good.

This bill has received the unanimous support of all members of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. I would like to thank the committee for its thorough review and for reporting back so quickly to the House.

Before I get into the amendments adopted by the committee, I would like to congratulate the member for Langley, British Columbia. I note his important work in promoting the interests of victims, of which this bill is a direct result. I would also note how the member for Langley worked with all parties to gain support for this bill and was open to a number of suggestions to improve the bill, all of which, I believe, makes this bill worthy of the unanimous support of the House.

The government indicated its support for the objectives of this bill, given its consistency with the government's commitment to the rights of victims of crime. In previous Parliaments, this government has taken bold and decisive action in this area, including the Safe Streets and Communities Act, which, among other things, established a new and higher mandatory minimum sentence for sexual offences against children, eliminated conditional sentences for serious and violent crimes, and eliminated record suspensions, formerly known as pardons, for serious offences.

As indicated in the Speech from the Throne on October 16, 2013, this government has committed to introduce and support new legislation that follows through on our belief that victims come before criminals. The Minister of Justice has already fulfilled one important government commitment to crack down on cyberbullying with the introduction of Bill C-13, the protecting Canadians from online crime act, on November 20, 2013.

Bill C-489 is completely consistent with the government's commitment to strengthen the rights of victims at every stage of the criminal justice process. This bill would require judges to either impose or fully consider specific conditions prohibiting contact between offenders and their victims, witnesses, or other individuals to protect them against contact from offenders.

The bill proposes to amend provisions of the Criminal Code and the Corrections and Conditional Release Act that would allow courts and the Parole Board of Canada to impose conditions on offenders released into the community. These include prohibitions for child sexual offenders orders, probation orders, conditional sentences, peace bonds for child sexual offences, and federal penitentiary conditional release orders.

It is estimated that about 110,000 offenders each year would be subject to this new requirement proposed by Bill C-489. The source for this figure is the 2012 Juristat, Statistics Canada, and the Parole Board of Canada's annual report on conditional releases.

Turning to the report of the justice committee, I note that a number of amendments to the bill were adopted by the committee. I would like to briefly summarize these amendments.

The bill proposes to amend section 161 of the Criminal Code. This is a prohibition order that currently requires a judge sentencing a child sexual offender to consider imposing specific prohibitions on the offender that come into effect once the offender is released into the community. These can include prohibitions to stay away from specific places where children might be present and/or not to work or volunteer with children.

The bill proposes to also require the court to consider prohibiting the offender from being within two kilometres of any dwelling house in which the victim can reasonably be expected to be present without a parent or guardian. In considering this proposal, the justice committee expressed concern that it was too rigid, as the court would only have two choices: either impose a two-kilometre restriction or impose no restrictions at all.

While a two-kilometre restriction might well be appropriate in many cases, the committee expressed concern that in many instances it might be too big or possibly not even a big enough distance to achieve the objectives of preventing contact between the victim and the offender. As a result, the committee adopted a motion to require judges to consider conditions of two kilometres or any other distance. I believe this change in the bill makes sense and I will fully support it.

The justice committee also adopted a motion to require the court to consider imposing a condition prohibiting an offender from being in a private vehicle with a child. In adopting this change, the committee recognized that the recent Safe Streets and Communities Act had already enacted a new condition against any unsupervised contact with a child under the age of 16.

• (1135)

Bill C-489 would also require a court to impose mandatory non-contact conditions for all prohibition and conditional sentences under the Criminal Code, although there is some discretion retained by the court not to impose such a condition if it finds there are "exceptional circumstances". In addition, the condition can be waived by the victim if they consent to the contact. The provision would also require a court to provide its reasons in writing if it does find that "exceptional circumstances" exist.

The justice committee also adopted a small number of amendments to these proposals. First, the bill was amended to change the requirement that the judge give written reasons to require the judge to provide reasons in the record.

The committee felt this change was important, as the requirement to provide reasons in writing would have a potentially significant impact on court resources. The new formulation of requiring reasons to be stated in the record would still achieve the desired results of the original clause.

Second, the committee amended these proposals in cases where the identified victim consents to the contact by the offender to require that the victim's consent be in writing or in some other form specified by the court. This would ensure certainty in subsequent proceedings regarding whether or not there was in fact consent. Again, I believe these amendments make sense, and I support them as well.

Bill C-489 proposes to include similar non-contact conditions for section 810.1, peace bonds that are imposed on suspected child sexual offenders. This provision in the Criminal Code allows a recognizance with conditions to be imposed on any individual by a court if there is a reasonable fear that the defendant will commit a sexual offence against a child under the age of 16, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

To maintain consistency and to avoid any confusion in the courts, Bill C-489 has been amended to remove the reference to "exceptional circumstances" in this provision, given the fact that the judge has full discretion to impose any of the listed conditions under section 810.1.

The bill has also been amended to remove the requirement of the court to provide written reasons for the peace bond condition, given that all peace bonds are already required to be provided in writing and filed with the court.

As introduced, the bill also proposed to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act to ensure that the releasing authority has the ability to impose non-contact conditions on offenders as well as geographic restrictions.

While the Corrections and Conditional Release Act currently authorizes conditions to be imposed upon an offender when granted conditional release, there is no specific obligation to consider the input of victims in determining appropriate conditions.

The committee adopted an amendment to require the releasing authority, either the Parole Board of Canada or the head of the institution, to impose reasonable and necessary conditions on offenders, including non-communication or geographic restrictions if a victim or other person has provided a statement regarding the harm done to them, the continuing impact of the offence, or their safety.

Finally, the committee amended the bill to come into force three months after receiving royal assent to provide adequate opportunity for courts and correctional institutions to prepare for these reforms.

I fully support the efforts of the sponsor of the bill to enhance the level of protection afforded to victims when offenders are released into the community.

Bill C-489, as amended by the justice committee, goes a long way to address concerns that all too often offenders are able to come into close proximity to their victims. I agree that Bill C-489 will help to ensure that victims, their families, witnesses, and other individuals

will feel safe in their homes and in their communities when offenders are released.

I hope all hon. members will join me in passing the bill.

● (1140)

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to an order made on Tuesday, November 26, 2013, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, December 4, 2013, at the expiry of the time provided for oral questions.

[*English*]

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

The Deputy Speaker: Seeing no more business before the House, the House will now stand suspended until noon.

(The sitting of the House was suspended at 11:42)

SITTING RESUMED

(The House resumed at 12 noon)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

ECONOMIC ACTION PLAN 2013 ACT NO. 2

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-4, A second act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 21, 2013 and other measures, as reported (without amendment) from the committee.

● (1200)

[*English*]

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Deputy Speaker: There are 284 motions in amendment standing on the notice paper for the report stage of Bill C-4.

Government Orders

Motions Nos. 1 to 284 will be grouped for debate and voted upon according to the voting pattern available at the table.

[*Translation*]

I will now put Motions Nos. 1 to 284 to the House.

• (1205)

[*English*]

MOTIONS IN AMENDMENT

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP) moved:

Motion No. 1

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 1.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP), seconded by the hon. member for Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour, moved:

Motion No. 2

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 2.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP) moved:

Motion No. 3

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 14.

Motion No. 4

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 59.

Motion No. 5

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 73.

Motion No. 6

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 80.

Motion No. 7

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 81.

Motion No. 8

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 113.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour, BQ), seconded by the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, moved:

Motion No. 9

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 126.

Motion No. 10

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 127.

Motion No. 11

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 128.

Motion No. 12

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 129.

Motion No. 13

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 130.

[*English*]

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP) moved:

Motion No. 14

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 131.

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour, BQ), seconded by the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, moved:

Motion No. 15

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 132.

Motion No. 16

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 133.

Motion No. 17

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 134.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP) moved:

Motion No. 18

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 137.

Motion No. 19

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 159.

Motion No. 20

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 160.

Motion No. 21

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 161.

Motion No. 22

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 162.

Motion No. 23

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 163.

Motion No. 24

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 164.

Motion No. 25

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 165.

Motion No. 26

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 166.

Motion No. 27

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 176.

Motion No. 28

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 177.

Motion No. 29

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 178.

Motion No. 30

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 179.

Motion No. 31

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 180.

Motion No. 32

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 181.

Motion No. 33

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 182.

Motion No. 34

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 183.

Motion No. 35

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 184.

Motion No. 36

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 185.

Motion No. 37

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 186.

Motion No. 38

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 187.

Motion No. 39

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 188.

Motion No. 40

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 189.

Motion No. 41

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 190.

Motion No. 42

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 191.

Motion No. 43

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 192.

Motion No. 44

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 193.

Motion No. 45

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 194.

Motion No. 46

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 195.

Motion No. 47

Government Orders

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 196.
Motion No. 48

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 197.
Motion No. 49

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 198.
Motion No. 50

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 199.
Motion No. 51

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 200.
Motion No. 52

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 201.
Motion No. 53

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 202.
Motion No. 54

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 203.
Motion No. 55

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 204.
Motion No. 56

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 205.
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That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 206.
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That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 207.
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That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 208.
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That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 209.
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That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 210.
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That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 215.
Motion No. 63

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 216.
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That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 217.
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That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 219.
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That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 220.
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That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 221.
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That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 222.
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That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 223.
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That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 224.
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That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 225.
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That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 227.
Motion No. 74

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 228.
Motion No. 75

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 229.
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That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 230.

Motion No. 77

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 231.
Motion No. 78

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 232.
Motion No. 79

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 233.
Motion No. 80

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 234.
Motion No. 81

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 235.
Motion No. 82

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 236.
Motion No. 83

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 237.
Motion No. 84

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 238.
Motion No. 85

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 239.
Motion No. 86

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 240.
Motion No. 87

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 241.
Motion No. 88

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 242.
Motion No. 89

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 243.
Motion No. 90

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 244.
Motion No. 91

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 245.
Motion No. 92

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 246.
Motion No. 93

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 247.
Motion No. 94

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 248.

● (1220)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP), seconded by the member for Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour, moved:

Motion No. 95

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 256.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP) moved:

Motion No. 96

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 272.

Motion No. 97

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 276.

Motion No. 98

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 282.

Motion No. 99

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 283.

Motion No. 100

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 284.

Motion No. 101

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 285.

Motion No. 102

Government Orders

Motion No. 202

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 390.

Motion No. 203

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 391.

Motion No. 204

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 392.

Motion No. 205

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 393.

Motion No. 206

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 394.

Motion No. 207

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That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 433.

Motion No. 246

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 434.

Government Orders

Motion No. 247

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 435.

Motion No. 248

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 436.

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That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 470.

Motion No. 283

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 471.

Motion No. 284

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 472.

● (1245)

[*English*]

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let me thank my colleague from Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques for seconding all of these changes.

Let us let Canadians know what all these amendments are in aid of. We are now debating Bill C-4, a second act to implement certain provisions of the budget, except that we are dealing with another attempt by the Conservatives to pull the wool over the eyes of Canadians. We want to slow the process down so that Canadians are not blindsided again with this omnibus legislation.

Government Orders

This is the fourth omnibus budget bill the government has brought in. Bill C-4 amends over 70 different pieces of legislation in over 300 pages. It follows on the heels of previous omnibus budget Bills C-38, C-45, and C-60. The bill contains entirely new laws: the Mackenzie gas project impacts fund act and the public service labour relations and employment board act. There are brand new acts within the bill.

Like its predecessor omnibus budget bills, this bill contains a wide variety of measures, many of which are not even in the budget and do not have any relationship to the budget. They are changes such as gutting health and safety protections for federal jurisdiction workers; cuts to reductions at the Veterans Review and Appeal Board; repealing the Canada Employment Insurance Financing Board; and changes to how we select Supreme Court judges.

These are not budget items, yet they are crammed into an omnibus bill, within a very short timeframe, to evade the scrutiny of Parliament. Canadians will not really have a full appreciation of the changes being made. It negates the opportunity of parliamentarians to hear a full range of witnesses, to engage in thorough examination, discussion, and debate about a bill, and to then propose reasoned amendments for improvements that would help make these laws better.

As we have seen in the past, because of the short timeframe, bills have been rushed through Parliament and passed, and then the government has had to go back and correct them after the fact because of mistakes it had made.

With this bill, as with all the other omnibus bills, Conservatives accepted not one amendment. They would not change even one comma. No one else has any good ideas. They would change nothing. In our discussions at committee, there were several amendments proposed. The NDP proposed 24. Other opposition parties proposed amendments. Not one change was accepted, as in the previous omnibus budget bills.

There was a time limit imposed on our study at committee. We had only two days of witnesses, including an hour with the minister, and there was a deadline of midnight. Everything we had not voted on in the bill was deemed passed, and if it was an amendment, it was deemed rejected. That certainly did not allow us much latitude for making changes or even for trying to slow down the parliamentary process and review.

Canadians are offended by this. We have heard from many Canadians who are getting the message about the lack of democracy in these omnibus budget bills. However, we also heard expert testimony.

The Canadian Bar Association testified at our committee during the two days of study. It said that “eschewing consultation and employing omnibus bills diminish the quality of our laws and the democratic process. We urge you to reconsider these practices”.

We completely agree.

• (1250)

We heard a variety of witnesses oppose the process of omnibus budget bills. The Canadian Taxpayers Federation agreed with us that this is a bad way to bring in legislation.

What it does is attach unpopular measures to popular measures and does not allow the separation of issues so that there can be good and thorough debate. It prevents separate votes on issues by lumping them all together. Obviously, it is less transparent and fundamentally less democratic. We believe that this evasion of parliamentary scrutiny is not worthy of the House.

Let me deal with the notion that this bill is in any way aiding the priorities of Canadians in terms of creating jobs and a stronger economy. In this bill, the Conservatives have failed to put forward significant job creation measures at a time when we are seeing stagnating incomes, stagnating wages, insecurity in the workplace, job insecurity, and all-time high household debt. This is at a time when we have a current account trade deficit of over \$60 billion, which is a record for our country.

We believe that what the Conservative government ought to do is deal with the real challenges the economy is facing. Let me quote a couple of sources. The Conservatives may feel that they know better, but let us hear what the International Monetary Fund had to say:

...the IMF no longer views Canada as the growth engine of the G7 economies. While bettering the European members, Canadian growth is projected to play second fiddle to the U.S. in 2012, 2013 and 2014. Growth in “other advanced countries” not in the G7 club, such as the Scandinavian nations and Australia and New Zealand, are also projected to outperform Canada. Going forward, it predicts the Canadian economy will continue to be held back by high household debt levels and a cooling housing market.

That is the International Monetary Fund.

Business columnist David Olive wrote:

We know from the recent American and British experience with austerity chic that you cannot cut your way to prosperity. Indeed, sucking demand, or cash, out of an economy with cutbacks to government spending—including essential services and infrastructure upgrading—merely adds to the jobless lines and cuts household incomes. That, in turn, drives up social-spending costs related to mounting unemployment.

Clearly, the Conservative government is failing on the economy.

Let us hear from Paul Wells, from *Macleans*, in his recent article, “Stephen Harper and the knowledge economy: perfect strangers”. He wrote:

...by the broadest measure of expenditure on research and development, Canada has fallen from 16th out of 41 comparable countries [since] the year Stephen Harper became prime minister...

The Conservative government is failing on so many counts to do the job on the economy, yet it has an omnibus budget bill that would cram in over 60 amendments to the Canada Labour Code. Anyone working anywhere in the federal jurisdiction, not just for the federal government but perhaps in the transportation sector, banking, telecommunications, interprovincial trucking, rail, ships, trains, or airlines, would be affected by this.

Government Orders

It would strip the powers of health and safety inspectors. They could inspect a workplace with a phone call. However, it would not be a qualified inspector; it would just be someone the minister appointed, who would not even have to be qualified.

There are so many regressive changes in this bill that attack the basic rights of people in the workplace. It is a colossal step backward. All Canadian workers should be very concerned about this legislation. It is a colossal step backward for Canadians.

New Democrats will not support the Conservatives' attempt to evade scrutiny by Parliament and Canadians. We oppose this budget and its implementation bills, unless it is revised to reflect the real priorities of Canadian families: creating quality, well-paid jobs; ensuring retirement security; fostering opportunities for young people; and making life for families more affordable.

I see that my time is up. I thank the House for the opportunity, and I welcome questions from my parliamentary colleagues.

• (1255)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member has pointed out, it is important for us to recognize what the Prime Minister has done with previous bills. It is also important for us to recognize that never in the history of Canada have we seen so much incorporated into budget legislation. What is happening is that the government is using the back door of budget debate to pass massive amounts of legislation that should be stand-alone legislation.

Could the member comment on the fact that when stand-alone legislation is incorporated into what should be a budget debate, it takes away the opportunity for parliamentarians in this House to contribute fully to a debate on an entirely separate piece of legislation that should have come before the House? We are supposed to be doing this on behalf of all Canadians.

• (1300)

Ms. Peggy Nash: Mr. Speaker, there has been a lot of debate recently about the rights of parliamentarians and what kind of autonomy and power we do or should have. I understand that there may even be some rumblings growing in the government caucus. I would urge my colleagues on the other side that if they want to assert their independence and truly represent the constituents who elected them to this place, then regardless of the content of this bill, they should stand in this place and vote against the process of these omnibus budget bills. They are fundamentally undermining our rights as parliamentarians and undermining the democratic right of Canadians to have adequate scrutiny of their legislation. I urge my colleagues on the other side to stand in their places and vote against this bill.

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to assure the leader of the Green Party that the rumblings she is hearing are from my tummy. There are no other rumblings coming from the Conservative Party. We fully support this budget and what it does for Canadians.

Given all the great things this budget does for aboriginal people, homeless people, the environment, and the economy as a whole, why would the Green Party vote against all of these wonderful initiatives? Can the member answer that?

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker—

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Parkdale—High Park has the floor, not the leader of the Green Party. Therefore, I will recognize the member for Parkdale—High Park.

Ms. Peggy Nash: Mr. Speaker, maybe the Green Party will answer that question at some point.

Let me just provide another example of what the government is doing. It created the Canada Employment Insurance Financing Board in order to take the politics out of financing employment insurance. That was at a time when Liberal and Conservative governments had plundered \$57 billion from the premiums paid by working people and employers across this country into the EI fund. The government created an independent fund to get away from those politics. It put the fund at zero, so there was no money. It was immediately in deficit, and ultimately, the premiums had to be raised. Now it wants to get rid of this board, this outside agency it created, and go back to being able to play politics with EI funding. It is shameful. It is a disgrace. It opens up the premiums paid into this fund, which ought to be going to unemployed workers and ought to be the best adjustment program Canada has during a time of insecurity and high unemployment. Instead, it uses them to play political points by having bigger surpluses or lower deficits than it would otherwise have. It is shameful. That is another measure included in this bill.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I was not sure if my hon. colleague had given the member for Parkdale—High Park a promotion or demotion by making her leader of the Green Party.

However, on this particular debate, the Green Party and the NDP are on the same page. We completely lament the fact that this is an omnibus bill once again, with multiple sections that were very much deserving of a full parliamentary review and full and proper hearings in committee.

I want to begin my analysis of Bill C-4 in presenting the various amendments I have made for deletions with two fairly brief points to the substance of the abuse of Parliament that omnibus budget bills represent.

We have heard it said by Conservative members in their talking points that this is nothing new. In every debate we have on budget omnibus bills, we are told this is normal. However, although I have only been a member of Parliament since 2011, I have been around a long time, and I know that we have never had budget omnibus bills of the staggering length of these bills until the current administration. It is only under the current Prime Minister that we have seen an omnibus budget bill top 200 pages.

Between 1994 and 2005, there were occasions of omnibus budget bills, and they were averaging 73 pages. The first big whopper of an omnibus budget bill occurred under the current Prime Minister in 2009. The 2010 budget omnibus bill was almost 900 pages.

Government Orders

Then, by 2012, the Conservatives started a new process. Ironically, my very first question in the House once I was elected was on the 2011 budget. I asked the Minister of Finance if he was planning the abuse of process constituted by an omnibus budget bill. He said he was not. Well, 2011 was indeed the last year in which we did not see omnibus budget bills. By 2012, the Conservative administration had started this new practice of putting forward two omnibus budget bills. It now refers to it as a tradition, almost like having Easter in the spring and Christmas in December. It is a tradition, apparently, that we are now going to see a 300- to 400-page spring omnibus budget bill, followed by 200-, 300-, or 400-page fall omnibus budget bill. The government has done this now for 2012 and 2013.

What this does is make a mockery of Parliament. I cannot put it more strongly than that. The idea that we would have disparate, unconnected bills, many of them never mentioned in the budget, that do substantial damage—this one in particular to labour relations, previous ones to environmental concerns—is an offence to Parliament. There is no excuse for it.

Second, I know there has been a lot of public interest in the fate of members of Parliament like myself and my party. I quite clearly represent a party with fewer than 12 MPs; I represent a party with one MP. However, I am a party in the House. So are my colleagues in the Bloc Québécois, and so are four independent members of Parliament. We were treated differently, since there were multiple motions carried through multiple committees to require that substantive amendments be submitted at committee, where we are not members and do not have equal and full rights of participation.

I will set that aside for now. That is why all of my amendments presented today are deletions. I did have substantive amendments I would have liked to present at report stage. I had 26 substantive amendments that I did present to the finance committee, and they went through a very quick ritual slaughter. I would have liked for the people of Canada to know about those amendments. I would have liked to have brought them forward at report stage.

Before I move to the specific parts of the bill that Canadians need to know about, I want to make an overarching comment.

As the only member of Parliament for the Green Party, one of the great advantages of having to watch everything while also doing due diligence on behalf of my constituents is that I am able to see everything in a comprehensive overview, not just in silos. There are themes here. There are disparate bills, but the manoeuvres are the same. The manoeuvres go in the direction of increasing ministerial discretion, reducing objective criteria, removing boards and agencies that have independent expertise, and putting bills forward instead to systems of political whim.

That certainly was the case in budget omnibus Bill C-38 and Bill C-45. They reduced criteria, letting the minister of environment or the minister of natural resources make decisions without guidance.

• (1305)

In this particular omnibus budget bill, we see it happening quite a lot again. I will mention just a few of the areas.

Under the Canada Labour Code changes, which my friend from the official opposition already referred to, the changes go in the

direction of removing health and safety officers and leaving decisions about health and safety up to the minister.

The same kinds of changes have happened in immigration. In Bill C-4, we see substantial changes in part 3, division 16, to the expression of interest system, basically for immigrants who are coming by way of economic advantage. The decision-making would now increasingly be by ministerial discretion.

Another area where we see ministerial discretion replacing an objective system is in division 14, in which we would repeal the Mackenzie Gas Project Impacts Act and replace it with a very similar Mackenzie gas project impacts funds act. In this change the one big difference between the two acts would be to replace an objective corporation, a regional organization that would make decisions about where the funds go, entirely with ministerial discretion.

My friend and colleague from the NDP, the member for Western Arctic, had this to say about it, because he has a lot of expertise in this area. He said:

There was an independent body set up by the Conservative government through an act of Parliament to manage this money and ensure that it was managed in a correct and careful fashion, following the procedures that had been set up and the planning that had taken place in these communities over a period of two years, from 2006 to 2008.

Then I have another excerpt from his quote:

What we have now is a move to a system that would have a Conservative minister handing out cheques for particular projects as he or she deems appropriate.

Before diving into the specifics of Bill C-4, I wanted to raise into higher profile a consistent ideological theme: moving more and more decision-making in our system of government, which is a parliamentary democracy, away from Parliament, and at the same time moving decision-making of ministers into more and more discretion with less and less guidance.

Those of us who have practised law at any time know that administrative law provides a certain amount of accountability whereby a minister has to follow certain prescribed considerations or in fact delegates authority to expert boards. Less and less will we see this. More and more will we see ministerial discretion. As well, we know that ministers do not really exercise discretion, not in this administration. They do what they are told by the people at PMO, who I think one Conservative described brilliantly as a series of Stepford wives who insist on certain decisions being made a certain way.

To raise my concerns in brief, this bill would do serious damage to the health and safety provisions of the Canada Labour Code. It would change the definition of danger and the ability to refuse dangerous work. It would remove the health and safety officers.

As well, a different section of this bill would change the Public Service Labour Relations Act, again for more ministerial discretion about which aspects of public service work would be considered to be essential and therefore not open to the usual recourse that trade unions have in negotiations.

Government Orders

We see changes to the Immigration Act to increase ministerial discretion. I would like to cite concerns from the Canadian Bar Association on the immigration law section. They wrote to the committee:

The CBA Section has concerns about the limited consultation on this important change to Canadian immigration law and policy. Bill C-4 would substantially change the way in which economic immigrants are selected to come to Canada. The Bill would remove these changes from Parliamentary scrutiny and approval and give what appears to be unilateral authority to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration to change selection rules and procedures.

Another section of the bill that has gotten very limited public attention is the section that appears in part 3, division 7, which is in aid of getting rid of our deficit by selling off assets. This is the sale of 20,000 hectares described as the Dominion Coal Blocks land.

My amendments at committee, had they been approved, would have provided some conservation protection. These lands are among the most ecologically significant in Canada. They are the blocks in the Flathead Valley and Elk Valley. They are an integral part of what is called the Crown of the Continent, right near the Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park, which is an international peace park on both sides of the border.

• (1310)

The Flathead has been protected by the strange reality of its ownership by the federal government over these years, but it is now to be sold for coal mining. We need to ensure that careful concern is applied to the conveyance of these lands and to ensure that we do not contaminate adjacent park areas. This is a concern already expressed by the United Nations.

• (1315)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have to again try to emphasize, as the member has done, the importance of the immigration and other legislation that has been incorporated in this bill. I have argued in the past and will continue to argue in the future that this is the wrong way to bring in legislation. By doing it this way, we are not allowing for proper procedures on substantial pieces of legislation.

For example, when the leader for the Green Party makes reference to immigration changes, that should have been stand-alone legislation that would have had a second reading at a committee of its own. The committee on immigration would have dealt with it. We would have had stakeholders and witnesses come to committee to provide comment on it, and then it would ultimately come back there. There would have been a more wholesome debate on the whole issue of that specific change.

I wonder if the member could highlight for people who might be watching what has been lost as a result of not having that separate stand-alone legislation for the immigration component and for other pieces.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, it is going to be very hard to know what was lost. We do know that in previous omnibus budget bills, even drafting errors were not corrected. We have seen this rush to pass legislation in a hurry, and if the disparate parts do not get reviewed by committees that have developed expertise in this area, they come back to the government's attention, even within six months, as mistakes.

At the simplest level, haste makes waste, and they end up coming back with amendments to fix things. This bill includes amendments to fix mistakes the government made last time in the employment insurance system for fisheries, fisheries families, and their income.

What is important to drive home is that at a more fundamental level we see a systematic, transformative change in Canadian legislation, away from well-considered and well-developed legislation operating under criteria and controls to a system that could very easily become completely manipulated through the Prime Minister's Office, a system in which ministers have nothing to do but follow through with their directions while the people who actually understand the system are precluded from the decision-making.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one of the over 70 changes through this legislation would be to public sector collective bargaining rights. Unlike in the private sector, the government wants to give itself the unfettered right to deem certain workers as essential workers in the federal public sector. This could have the impact of their deeming the majority of workers in a bargaining unit to be essential workers, thereby essentially denying them normal collective bargaining rights and the normal right to strike. Coca-Cola cannot do that with its bargaining, but it is what the minister is proposing to do.

Does the member have any comments about the impact this would have on public sector collective bargaining?

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, this legislation, as with other pieces of legislation we have seen in this Parliament, would strike directly at the heart of collective bargaining. I will admit a bias, because part of my past work history included working for a union side labour firm and working for labour unions and in collective bargaining.

The principles of collective bargaining are important. If the tools that a labour union and an employer have at their disposal are roughly equal, the employer has the right to lock out and the trade union has the right to strike. If that aspect of collective bargaining is removed, essentially it becomes a system of the employer dictating terms. The employees have no recourse.

In healthy democracies and healthy economies and in places where civil society is healthy and there is less of a gap between the wealthiest and the poorest, the strengths of the trade union movement are one of the clearest indicators of a healthy society and a robust middle class. Striking at the heart of collective bargaining for federal employees, as this bill does, is not in Canada's interest.

• (1320)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today, we are talking about deleting provisions of Bill C-4 at report stage. The Conservative government wants to hastily pass this bill without conducting any real impact studies.

The Conservatives claim that this bill focuses exclusively on the economy, but that is far from true. Bill C-4 will affect a host of different areas. Some of the changes set out in the bill will mainly affect Quebec, its regions, its entrepreneurs and its businesses.

Government Orders

For example, Bill C-4 will eliminate the federal tax credit on labour-sponsored venture capital corporations, which are more commonly referred to as workers' funds. Over 80% of these funds are found in Quebec. The main ones are the Fonds de solidarité FTQ and the Fondation CSN.

This will therefore have a direct impact on Quebec's economy and particularly that of its regions. These funds are quite prevalent in Quebec and they have helped to create and maintain tens of thousands of jobs, strengthen communities and breathe life into the economy where regular instruments, such as bank loans, were unable to play that role. It is therefore extremely important that the federal government reconsider this decision.

Another point of contention is that this mammoth bill affects the appointment of Supreme Court justices. Recently, a judge was appointed who was not on the list submitted by the Government of Quebec. What is more, he did not even meet the criteria set out in legislation. The Supreme Court has to include three justices from Quebec for a reason. Quebec's civil law is quite different from Canadian law, and the justices who sit on the highest court must be able to rely on sufficient expertise so that they can rule on complex civil law issues.

In addition, in the many existing legal cases between Ottawa and Quebec, it is only natural that Quebec should be able to rely on three justices who are attuned to the province's unique characteristics. Justice Nadon decided to step aside temporarily because his appointment is being challenged. The federal government decided to refer Justice Nadon's case to the Supreme Court. Now, the Supreme Court will be both judge and judged in this case. Not wanting to be defeated in this dispute, the federal government is trying to use Bill C-4 to amend the Supreme Court Act to make Justice Nadon's appointment legal, after the fact.

For the Bloc Québécois, the amendments in Bill C-4 pertaining to the amount of time the person nominated must have spent as a member of the Quebec bar are nothing less than an admission of the problems that tainted the appointment of Justice Nadon. His appointment, we should point out, was unfortunately endorsed by the Conservatives as well as the Liberals and the NDP, who included Justice Nadon on their list of top three candidates. Once again, the Bloc Québécois was the only party to oppose this appointment.

Instead of changing the legislation to try to save face, the federal government must acknowledge that it must choose Supreme Court justices who represent Quebec from the list submitted by the Quebec government, as has always been the case.

Another point of contention is that this bill will eliminate the Canada Employment Insurance Financing Board. It has become clear that the Conservatives, like the Liberals before them, have no problem using employment insurance for political purposes and taking the employment insurance fund surpluses.

The board was established to ensure that employment insurance premiums are used only for the employment insurance program. When we read this description, we can better understand why the Conservatives want to abolish a body that was opposed to their helping themselves to the surplus, as they are currently doing. This

year alone, \$2 billion will be taken from the employment insurance account. That is, of course, a hidden tax.

We also do not agree on the major changes to labour laws included in the bill.

● (1325)

During the recent labour disputes at Air Canada and CP, the Conservatives showed that they were allergic to any form of job action taken by employees. The mere possibility of a strike worries them so much that they have to pass special legislation to prevent them.

What is more, Air Canada is now very quietly transferring specialized, well-paid jobs to Toronto without the federal government lifting a finger to intervene.

What is truly shocking is that all the federalist parties in the House are just sitting back and letting Air Canada get away with skirting the law and transforming its offices in Montreal into post office boxes.

I keep bringing up this issue, because in the Air Canada privatization contract it was agreed that any jobs in maintenance and at headquarters would remain in Montreal. However, jobs are currently slipping away to Toronto and every member in the House of Commons is remaining silent, except for the Bloc members.

I am calling on all NDP, Conservative and Liberal members in Quebec. We should stand together to prevent the injustice that is the transfer of high-paying jobs to Ontario. Furthermore, this transfer is completely at odds with the contract Air Canada signed when it was privatized. I am making an appeal. I hope that all members from Quebec break their silence about this.

With Bill C-4, the Conservatives are now making major changes to the way in which services are deemed essential because they want to pre-empt any possibility of job action by employees.

From now on, the Conservatives are giving the employer the exclusive right to determine whether a service is essential and to set the number of positions needed to provide that service.

Previously, the essential services designation was agreed upon by the union and the employer. This provided for a level playing field. These are major changes because they affect the fundamental balance that must be in place between employers and employees.

Even worse is the fact that Bill C-4 politicizes the occupational health and safety process. Indeed, Bill C-4 gives the minister the power to issue directives to employers and to make certain decisions that were previously made by health and safety officers.

It goes even further by changing the concept of "danger" in the Canada Labour Code and, as a consequence, exposing employees to higher levels of risk.

As I just explained, the Bloc Québécois has proposed the removal of the clauses pertaining to labour-sponsored funds, employment insurance—including the Employment Insurance Commission—the Canada Labour Code and the Supreme Court.

These issues should be addressed in separate bills and not in an omnibus bill. That is why we proposed that these clauses be removed.

Government Orders

[*English*]

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member's speech with much interest, and I would like to acknowledge that he is our longest serving member of Parliament. I know he has the interest of his home province at heart.

However, the tone of the hon. member's speech was very negative. He pointed out a lot of complaints and faults in his speech, but I am wondering whether he would support the hiring tax credit for small business that is in Bill C-4 and that would be important for small businesses in the province of Quebec.

How about electronic applications for students, access to Canada student loans for the students in Quebec who access this program? It would speed that process up for them and help them to get loans to advance their education.

What about the accelerated capital cost allowance for manufacturers? The manufacturing sector is important in Quebec.

Does the hon. member support these measures that are in Bill C-4? With regard to our move to balance the budget, does he agree that it is an important ideal to move Canada towards balanced budgets?

• (1330)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Louis Plamondon: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his questions.

I did not mention the hiring tax credit because we support this measure, but it will not have the kind of impact the member thinks it will. These measures are insignificant and will not have the desired effect, especially for SMEs.

Electronic applications for students, as with anything that has to do with education, loans and grants, fall under provincial jurisdiction, so Quebec is responsible for them. The existing systems work very well for students. We have no complaints.

The accelerated tax credits could be a positive, but the member must acknowledge that they generally favour large corporations, as is the case in the automotive and oil sectors. When an oil company has \$1 billion to spend and can get a deduction in the form of tax credits for purchases over three years, that can make a huge difference compared to 10 years. However, if an SME is spending \$50,000, that will not have a huge impact whether it is three years or 10 years. This credit therefore favours big companies, and small businesses are once again shut out of this budget.

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

I could not help but think it was odd when he mentioned that the NDP was complicit in Justice Nadon's appointment process, since that meeting was held in camera. The details of the process were confidential, so we do not know what kind of debate was going on or what our representative, the member for Gatineau, said.

On October 31, the member for Gatineau once again asked for the unanimous consent of the House to respect Quebec's place at the Supreme Court and in the Supreme Court Act. In light of what I just said, it is clear that we took this lack of respect for Quebec in our

constitutional structure very seriously, and we have frequently spoken out in defence of this.

I would like to give my colleague the opportunity to step back and to acknowledge the work that the NDP has done on this issue.

Mr. Louis Plamondon: Mr. Speaker, what I said was that the parties met in private—the member himself said it—and the outcome was that this judge was chosen. The three parties were complicit. That was also the case with the unilingual English judge, when the NDP approved the appointment and then criticized it, realizing that it had made a mistake. That was the context surrounding my comments about the NDP. The party did not speak up right away and say that this gentleman should have been immediately dropped during the secret meeting because he did not meet the usual criteria for being appointed to the court.

I could provide other examples of how, often, the NDP has not been involved in the debate on issues of concern to Quebec. For example, you said nothing about the Canadian securities commission in Toronto. During the debate on hydroelectric development in Newfoundland and Labrador, not only did you not speak out against it—even though Quebec passed a unanimous resolution—you rose in the House to speak in favour of it. You were completely uninvolved in the debate about the fact that Quebec City did not get a contract to build warships. That is what I am getting at—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The member has been in the House for a number of years. He knows he is to address his comments to the Chair and not to other members.

[*English*]

Resuming debate.

The hon. member for Nanaimo—Alberni.

• (1335)

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a great pleasure to stand today on behalf of the residents of Nanaimo—Alberni and enter the debate on extremely important federal legislation.

Bill C-4 is an act to implement measures contained in budget 2013. It is the second such bill therefore we could refer to it as BIA 2, the budget implementation act 2. Budget 2013 continues our government's drive toward creating jobs and promoting economic growth in a highly competitive world. It also continues our steadfast drive toward returning to fiscal balance by 2015. Why this bill is relevant and how it is managed is extremely important to the lives of each and every Canadian.

First, let me remind those watching the debate that Canada was slammed by an economic tsunami in 2008, one that was not of our making, but one that crashed across our borders. It started south of our border with a subprime mortgage meltdown. As the credit crisis and housing defaults put financial institutes in peril, the U.S.A. and other nations backstopped the banks to prevent panic south of the border. They spent billions of public dollars in bailout money to institutions like Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae.

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Businesses had trouble maintaining cash flow and major industries, like the auto sector, danced along the edge of insolvency. It quickly spread around the globe. Many nations were faced with huge financial commitments to stabilize their financial institutions and prevent wholesale collapse.

As the world economy spun, our government had to act fast to keep Canadians employed and provide incentives and retraining programs. Part of the economic action plan was targeted short-term spending on infrastructure, investments that would generate economic activity, keep people employed and improve the quality of life in communities across Canada.

Our plan worked. In fact, it worked so well that since the depths of the recession in July 2009, we have generated nearly a million new jobs, more than 80% of those in the private sector. We have been driving toward balanced budgets year by year with targeted measures to keep our economy moving forward. Canada has the best job creation record in the G7, the most stable banking sector and the lowest debt to GDP ratio.

Why is this important? It is important because debt is strangling economic opportunity and competitiveness in many nations. The commitment of this government and the Prime Minister is that we will bring Canada back to balanced budgets and we will do it without raising taxes and without slashing transfers to the provinces for services upon which Canadians depend.

I am pleased to report that we are on track to do exactly that. Our Minister of Finance recently reported that we would achieve this objective not only on time, but ahead of time. We will, barring world circumstances beyond our sight or control, achieve that objective and a healthy surplus by the fiscal year 2015.

Budget 2013 and Bill C-4 continue to drive toward balanced budgets. There are provisions that impact British Columbia in a significant way, such as \$92 million for innovation in the forest sector. These funds will help our forest industry continue the transformation to compete in new global realities.

Budget 2013 includes measures to protect the iconic west coast Pacific salmon. In fact, the entire Pacific salmon stamp, collected from recreational fishers on the coast, is valued at just over \$6. For years, \$1 from that stamp used to go to the PSF, the Pacific Salmon Foundation. Now the entire value of that stamp, which would be a value of about \$1.2 million, will go to the Pacific Salmon Foundation and into projects that restore salmon habitat. In partnership with local environmental groups, we have salmon enhancement societies and streamkeepers, which share great interest in bringing them back stream by stream, which is the model of the Pacific Salmon Foundation.

In addition, this budget brought in the recreational fisheries conservation partnership program. That is a further \$10 million over two years to help activist groups, like the ones I mentioned, advance causes that help restore fisheries habitat, improve the riparian zones and remove obstacles that prevent fish from getting up to their spawning grounds.

• (1340)

This is like one project that was announced in my riding. A major highway culvert was eroded and it was restored so the fish could get

past that obstacle and up to the spawning grounds. These projects, collectively, have a huge impact on helping our great iconic salmon resource on the west coast.

The funds dramatically increase the reach of our premier salmon habitat restoration institute on the coast. Doing so allows mother nature to do her thing. As we remove obstacles and improve the riparian zones and spawning grounds, it helps mother nature help the salmon do what they do best, which is to reproduce successfully and create opportunities commercially, for first nations through their food cultural ceremonial programs and recreational anglers. One of the reasons many people move to British Columbia and coastal B.C. is to take part in a tremendous fishing opportunity.

Since 2006, our economic action plan has cut taxes in over 150 different measures to make our economy more productive. As a result, the average Canadian family is saving about \$3,200 each and every year in reduced federal taxes. That means more money to meet family needs and address priorities of their own choosing. On this side of the House, we think that is a good idea. It allows Canadians to manage their own money, invest in priorities that strengthen their families, help their children participate in activities that are meaningful to them and ensure the needs of their families are met.

Bill C-4 continues our drive to job creation and economic stimulus. I would like to refer to a few of these measures.

I will talk about renewing the hiring tax credit for small business and other measures, such as closing tax loopholes to ensure tax fairness. The one I mentioned earlier was the accelerated capital cost allowance in a question for the member opposite, a measure that would allow manufacturers to invest in equipment upgrades. There are other measures like extending the lifetime capital gains exemption to increase the rewards for investing in small business in Canada and closing tax loopholes to protect the inherent integrity and fairness of our tax system.

The number one priority of our government is creating jobs. The hiring tax credit recognizes the important role of small business in sustaining Canadian communities. Economic action plan 2013 proposes to extend and expand the temporary hiring credit for small businesses. The measure provides up to a \$1,000 credit against an increase in EI premiums for businesses. Small businesses are the engines of job creation. This measure was first introduced in budget 2011. It helps defray the costs of taking on a new employee and permits local employers to take advantage of emerging economic opportunities. It is estimated some 560,000 small businesses could potentially benefit from this measure, saving them an estimated \$225 million in federal taxes in 2013.

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With regard to tax fairness, since 2006, including measures in the 2013 economic action plan, the government has introduced more than 75 measures to improve the integrity of our tax system. One example in budget 2013 is to close tax loopholes that permit certain individuals and/or institutions to avoid tax. Included are stiff penalties to curb a disturbing new trend, which is the electronic suppression of sales software that is designed to falsify records for the purpose of tax evasion.

Specifically, the following administrative money penalties and criminal offences apply. For using electronic suppression of sales software, there is an administrative monetary penalty of \$5,000 for the first infraction and up to \$50,000 on subsequent infractions. For possession and acquisition, there are even higher penalties for the manufacture, development, sale and possession. There are also criminal offences for those involved in this type of tax avoidance. Those measures are broadly supported by business and job creators across Canada. If I had time, I would quote the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants, which issued a statement commenting on closing the tax loopholes and tax fairness measures in the budget. It concluded by saying that it supported efforts to maintain the integrity of our tax system.

• (1345)

The tax relief for new manufacturing and equipment is a very important measure, and there are many other measures in this budget that are important for advancing our economy and bringing us back to balanced budgets. I hope all the members opposite will join with us in passing these measures to keep Canada moving in the right direction.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened very carefully to the speech given by the member for Nanaimo—Alberni. He talked about many things in his speech, and he overlooked some other things.

One of the things that interests me the most in Bill C-4 is the issue of phasing out the tax credit for labour-sponsored venture capital funds, which, as we know, are extremely important in Quebec. There is about \$10 billion in capital, and nearly 70% of that capital is invested in Quebec and outside Quebec.

This makes Quebec a leader in the area of venture capital, not only in Canada, but internationally. In terms of economic importance, Quebec ranks third among all OECD members. Furthermore, it invests nearly three times as much venture capital as the Canadian average, and more than four times the Ontario average.

At present, 160,000 jobs are supported by the capital provided by labour-sponsored funds. The phasing-out of this tax credit could kill about 20,000 of those jobs. The government claims to support economic growth and job creation, but this measure will be extremely harmful to Quebec.

What does the member think of that? I would like to hear his comments on the phasing-out of this tax credit.

Furthermore, why does the government insist on continuing in this direction, without any proof, when Canada really needs venture capital and private equity funds want to continue benefiting from the support of the Fonds de solidarité and Fondation?

[*English*]

Mr. James Lunney: Mr. Speaker, in trying to balance the budget for a country the size of Canada and with an economy like ours, there are many measures that have to be kept in balance.

As I mentioned in parts of my speech, there are measures to close developing situations where tax loopholes have been exploited by certain individuals. Also, there are investments that are strategically designed to help certain sectors advance their interests, but times have changed. For example, there are changes to measures that were brought in the 1970s to help credit unions in the country. Now, with advances and changes in the budget over the years, those measures are no longer needed and so they are being phased out. There are measures for the mining sector that are being phased out, some by 2015 and some by 2017.

The measures the member has referred to are part of the ongoing evolution of shifting to ensure our tax plan remains balanced, fair, representative and that it delivers the kinds of benefits to keep our economy moving in the right direction.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find it somewhat amazing the number of times in which the member has made reference to balancing the budget and the government's desire to balance the budget. In reality, the government inherited a multi-billion dollar surplus from a Liberal government. Prior to the recession even starting, the Conservatives turned that multi-billion dollar surplus into a multi-billion dollar deficit. Now they are trying to convince Canadians that they can actually bring us back to a balanced budget sometime in the future. There is a credibility issue with which the Conservatives will have to deal.

Having said that, my question for the member is this. Why does the government choose to bring in so much legislative change through the back door of budget legislation when in fact it should be separate pieces of legislation?

Bill C-4 is really about that. It is being used as a back door for that sneaky government, through the PMO, to bring in numerous changes to other pieces of legislation.

Why is the Conservative government doing that?

Mr. James Lunney: Mr. Speaker, frankly, the member also has selective memory it appears. He says that we inherited a great surplus.

• (1350)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Billions.

Mr. James Lunney: Yes, billions, but in fact we managed the economy so well in 2006, 2007 and 2008 that we paid down \$37 billion on our national debt. That actually took us to the lowest national debt in 25 years at about \$458 billion.

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The member would probably like to acknowledge that the economic downturn was worldwide. It did not start in this nation and so we had to respond. We had to keep people employed and we had to do something that this government was reluctant to do, which was to run a deficit in order to keep Canadians on track. Unlike the government opposite when it was faced with a deficit, we did not slash transfers to the provinces for health, social services and education.

We are determined to balance the budget by growing the economy and without increasing taxes. We are on track to do that to keep Canada going in the right direction.

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak today to Bill C-4, the government's latest budget implementation bill.

The bill fails to address the very real challenges faced by the middle class in Canada.

[*Translation*]

This bill does little to help middle-class families in Canada.

[*English*]

First and foremost, this bill does nothing to create good paying jobs for Canadians. Middle-class Canadians are worried about their finances. They ought to be, because they face record levels of personal debt, amounting to \$1.66 for every dollar of annual income. They are struggling to make ends meet when interest rates are low. They are petrified to think of what will happen in the future if interest rates start to rise at some point.

One of the driving forces behind this accumulation of household debt is the direct financial subsidization of adult children who cannot yet make it on their own. These are young people between the ages of 25 to 35 who are living at home and unable to pay rent. In fact, 43% of Canadian families have directly financially subsidized young people who have lived for extended periods of time at home with them because they cannot make ends meet. Young Canadians have been left behind during this so-called economic recovery; they have 225,000 fewer jobs than before the downturn.

[*Translation*]

Bill C-4 does nothing to help young Canadians find jobs, even though the youth unemployment and underemployment rates are higher than they were before the recession.

[*English*]

Instead of supporting job creation for young Canadians, a number of items in Bill C-4 would put existing jobs at risk. This bill phases out the labour-sponsored venture capital corporation tax credit. These venture funds help small business start-ups grow and create good jobs for Canadians. They are particularly important in Quebec.

[*Translation*]

All of the chambers of commerce in Quebec are against these changes.

[*English*]

However, it is important to realize that the impacts of these labour-sponsored funds and investments, many of which are based in

Quebec, benefit small business across the country, in start-ups, technology companies, biotech, cleantech, and certainly the jobs of tomorrow.

The provinces that have labour-sponsored venture capital funds include B.C., Saskatchewan, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador. Bill C-4 would cut the tax incentives for those labour-sponsored venture capital funds by half, endangering not only their business model but also the businesses that rely on that venture capital to grow and create jobs.

The government has said that the reason it is doing this is because it is bringing in the VCAP, the venture capital action plan. The problem is that the VCAP is not up and running yet. Therefore, the government is actually destroying one source of venture capital, the labour-sponsored venture capital source, without having a new program that is running. It is creating a vacuum in funding. That funding is extremely important to create innovation, commercialization, and jobs of today and tomorrow for young Canadians, exactly the kind of jobs we ought to be focused on.

Again, this is like the government with its jobs training program that it introduced shortly after the last budget. In fact, it is still not running. It forgot to talk to the provinces. Therefore, there is no jobs training program. It spent millions of dollars on advertising it, but there is no program. This is a government that invests money in self-promotion, but does not get the job done when it comes to putting in place the kinds of measures to create jobs, good training and to close the job skills gap. The government is more interested in promoting activities as opposed to getting the job done.

In terms of the mining sector, Bill C-4 reduces tax incentives for Canadian mining companies, which will severely hurt Canada's competitiveness in an important global industry where Canada is seen as an international leader. Canada's mining sector is an important source of good paying jobs for Canadians. These measures in Bill C-4 would put Canadian jobs, particularly in rural and remote communities, at risk. These are communities that are struggling. Rural Canada is struggling. This is no time to reduce the support for and incentives for investments in mining, particularly at a time when the mining industry faces huge challenges globally.

● (1355)

In terms of employment insurance rates, the Conservatives claim that the proposed changes to EI rates are going to be good for the Canadian economy. Certainly extending the EI hiring credit is an initiative that we do support, but this credit has been in place for three years and young Canadians are still struggling to find good work. Clearly, this measure is not strong enough to kick-start the economy, particularly in terms of opportunities for young Canadians.

Statements by Members

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

● (1400)

[English]

WORLD WAR II HEROES

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honour two Chilliwack heroes, Flying Officer Dave Barrett and Warrant Officer Bernie McNicholl, for their service in Bomber Command operations during World War II.

Flying Officer Barrett was a pilot in Mosquito bombers with the Pathfinders, flying ahead of the bomber squadrons to light up the target areas.

Warrant Office McNicholl was a rear gunner on a Halifax heavy bomber, where he completed 38 operations over enemy territory, an incredible feat, considering that nearly half of all air crew in Bomber Command never made it to the end of their tour.

My late grandfather, Bill Strahl, joined the Royal Canadian Air Force during World War II, so it was a special privilege to meet and honour these two RCAF heroes and present them with their Bomber Command honours.

Approximately 50,000 Canadians served with the RCAF and the RAF in Bomber Command operations over occupied Europe in one of Canada's most significant contributions to the Second World War effort.

We will never forget their service and sacrifice.

* * *

[Translation]

COMMUNITY HOUSING PROJECT

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to reiterate my support for a community housing project called *Envolée des mères*, which is particularly close to my heart.

This project helps young single mothers in the region and is backed by the Drummondville organization *Partance*. Together, we want to help improve the quality of life of low-income single mothers who want to return to school or re-enter the labour market.

Unfortunately, the Conservatives are giving up on social housing by putting an end to long-term funding for the social housing stock in Canada.

The NDP will always be guided by the legacy of Jack Layton, who was a staunch defender of the right to housing. That is why I am proud to financially support this project. Jack Layton will be immortalized in Drummond, where a housing unit will bear his name.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

However, Bill C-4 also freezes EI rates, which at first glance may seem like a good idea. When EI rates are going up, it may be good for small businesses and good for workers to freeze EI rates. We now know that the EI account will be balanced in 2015 instead of 2016, and ultimately would be able to start falling after that, left to its own devices.

The problem is that the Conservatives had promised to set EI rates at a break-even rate as soon as the EI account is balanced. However, Bill C-4 actually breaks that promise by freezing EI rates until the end of 2016, instead of them being allowed to fall naturally commensurate with the account being in balance.

As a result, Canadians will pay an extra \$5.6 billion more than what is required to balance the EI account. That is an extra \$5.6 billion over two years that we should be using to keep in the pockets of Canadians and Canadian small businesses in order to create jobs during a time of significant unemployment and underemployment in Canada.

This legislation has a large number of measures that have nothing to do whatsoever with the budget or the fiscal framework. They do not belong in a budget bill. This legislation amends the rules for appointments to the Supreme Court. With Bill C-4, the Conservatives created this farce whereby the finance committee was tasked with making decisions on the selection process for the Supreme Court of Canada. What is next? Are we going to be having members of the justice committee making decisions on government-wide fiscal policy?

Bill C-4 amends the Conflict of Interest Act to allow cabinet to designate one person or class of persons as public office holders or reporting public office officers.

We have even heard from the Prime Minister's former chief of staff, Guy Giorno, who was so concerned about this part of Bill C-4 that he wrote to MPs on the finance committee. This is what Mr. Giorno had to say about the measures in part 3, division 15, of Bill C-4:

Cabinet's power to designate new public office holders and reporting public office holders would be unlimited and far-reaching. The bill would place no restrictions on cabinet's power to designate individuals and classes of individuals as subject to the Act. Virtually anyone could be designated as subject to the Conflict of Interest Act at any point during his or her employment or tenure in office.

The government has not indicated who, if anyone, might be designated if these provisions are passed and come into force. The Budget is silent on this point. In fact, the Budget Plan did not even suggest that the Conflict of Interest Act should be amended.

Mr. Giorno makes some very clear points as to why this may be the wrong direction, but the finance committee is not the best committee to actually deal with this kind of issue or the process around the appointments to the Supreme Court.

The changes to the Labour Code in the bill ought to have been dealt with at another committee. They were broad, sweeping and controversial and ought not to be dealt with by the House of Commons finance committee. Again, there are changes to the numbers of members of the veterans review board. The government continues to demonstrate disrespect for Parliament, parliamentarians and the people who elect us. Conservative members and opposition members have a responsibility to defend their right to do their jobs and to study legislation.

Statements by Members

Mr. François Choquette: I also want to acknowledge Dominique Chevalier and the Rotary Club for the work they have done on this project that brings the whole community together.

* * *

[English]

CITIZEN FROM BOLTON

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured today to congratulate Bolton resident, William J. Coyle, on his appointment as honorary colonel of 16 Wing Headquarters Borden and on receiving an honorary doctorate from the Royal Military College of Canada.

Bill has dedicated himself to serving his country, and we appreciate the countless contributions he has made during his long and distinguished career. These recent honours underscore his lifelong pursuit of personal excellence and outstanding service. We as a community celebrate his many achievements with him.

The 16 Wing headquarters will significantly benefit from Bill's considerable knowledge, immense experience and exceptional enthusiasm for the Canadian Forces.

This Honorary Doctorate is an incredible achievement and an enormous distinction, from one of Canada's most prestigious educational institutions.

Caledon is very proud of Bill's success. On behalf of the Government of Canada and the residents of Dufferin—Caledon, I would like to express my sincerest congratulations on these very special honours.

* * *

WOMEN IN SPORT

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Sports Day in Canada was held November 30, in communities from coast to coast to coast, to celebrate the power of sport, from grassroots to high performance, and to build community and national spirit and facilitate healthy living.

Canada must continue to deliver sport programs that meet the needs of girls and women, if we want to develop fit, self-confident girls and women across their lifespan. As in other areas of Canadian life, we need more women on boards, in this case of national sports organizations.

Although we have made good strides in women achieving Olympic success, we still have low numbers of women coaches at the high performance level: college, university and national teams. We must focus on attracting more women into coaching and officiating.

I know all of us in this House look forward to the Sochi Olympics and Paralympics and a new generation of female role models to celebrate.

● (1405)

SENIORS IN ELMWOOD-TRANSCONA

Mr. Lawrence Toet (Elmwood—Transcona, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the many seniors in Elmwood—Transcona who have worked hard and helped make our country great, as well as the organizations helping them to stay active, healthy and engaged in the community.

I would like to acknowledge the great work of the Transcona Council for Seniors, the Elmwood-East Kildonan Senior Centre and the Good Neighbours Active Living Centre. These organizations provide classes in activities such as cooking, art, exercise and woodworking. They also provide assistance with transportation, serve as gathering places and are an exceptional means of support for seniors in Elmwood—Transcona.

I would especially like to recognize one senior in particular, Juno Beach veteran Paul Martin, who upon his return from the war served his community in many roles over the years, including as mayor. Most important, he has given presentations for the last 30 years to students about the importance of Remembrance Day.

Sadly, at the age of 93, he recently said he would be giving his last presentation to the students at École Centrale. Paul Martin is a shining example of what community commitment is all about. God bless Paul.

* * *

CLIFF CHADDERTON

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is with great sadness I rise in the House of Commons today to announce the passing of one of Canada's greatest citizens, Mr. Cliff Chadderton.

Mr. Chadderton was born in Fort William, Ontario, and was raised in Winnipeg. In 1939, he joined the Royal Winnipeg Rifles. He fought for his country with great valour and distinction, being wounded twice. He said, "I left my leg in that beautiful country of The Netherlands". When he came back, he was a tireless advocate for all veterans and for children with disabilities, and he helped start the War Amps society. He was also chair of the National Council of Veterans Associations in Canada.

He received many awards, including the Terry Fox Hall of Fame, the Canada Veterans Hall of Valour, the Companion of the Order of Canada and the Legion of Honour from France.

Mr. Chadderton was a true Canadian, in that he sacrificed so much of his own personal life to help those citizens around him, especially those children with disabilities. That is why I encourage every Canadian to recognize and honour this man by joining up with the War Amps and getting a key chain with a key tag so that children with disabilities can be helped.

Mr. Chadderton, indeed, was a true hero. On behalf of the House of Commons, I extend our sincere condolences to his family and friends and say, "Lest we forget".

150TH ANNIVERSARY OF HURON UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

Mrs. Susan Truppe (London North Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise in the House, today, to extend congratulations, on behalf of the Government of Canada, to London's Huron University College on its 150th birthday.

Over the years, Huron College has established a reputation for being one of Canada's leading liberal arts colleges. Chosen by many for its charming campus, diverse and inclusive student body, and academic excellence, Huron has always stood out as a leader in post-secondary education.

During my time as an MP, I have been privileged to work with Dr. Stephen McClatchie, principal of Huron College, and so many remarkable Huron students, graduates and alumni. In fact, I happen to have a Huron graduate right here in my own office in Ottawa.

Congratulations to Huron University College and all who are gathered in London today to celebrate this tremendous milestone. I am honoured to have Huron College in my riding of London North Centre. May the next 150 years be as meaningful and inspiring as the past 150.

* * *

TURKIC CANADIAN CONVENTION

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Anatolian Heritage Federation, as it hosts its first annual convention today at the Marriott Hotel. Its annual receptions have been great successes and have brought together a wide range of Canadian and Turkic stakeholders.

Although our two countries already collaborate as long-standing allies in NATO and co-operate in various multilateral forums, they have not met their full potential. The first Turkic Canadian Convention intends to establish a framework for bilateral relations, with two discussion panels, a luncheon with dignitaries, and a reception to celebrate Turkic heritage in Canada. Hopefully, this will become a landmark annual event showcasing Turkic-Canadian solidarity.

As the chair of the Canada-Turkey Friendship Group, I once again congratulate the Anatolian Heritage Federation for all its hard work. I wish it continued success today and in all its future endeavours.

* * *

● (1410)

[Translation]

MONTCALM FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN

Ms. Manon Perreault (Montcalm, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to draw attention to the traditional charity fundraising campaign held in Quebec in December. Every year, thousands of volunteers across Quebec turn out to collect non-perishable food items and cash donations in order to help families going through hard times.

In Montcalm, the fundraising campaign is always an opportunity to work together, share, help out and, above all, cultivate friendships. Yesterday, my husband and I went to help a group working out of the Émilie-Gamelin parish in Saint-Lin-Laurentides. We met compassionate people who, in their own way, encourage every volunteer to

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do their best. I have a great deal of respect for their dedicated efforts. They work tirelessly to help young families, seniors and people with disabilities.

I must also mention the organization *Parents de Mascouche*, whose mission is to help and to nurture the development of young vulnerable families.

I sincerely ask my colleagues to be generous so that, together, we can make real change happen.

* * *

[English]

MEMBER FOR SCARBOROUGH—AGINCOURT

Mr. Rob Clarke (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the Liberal Party has decided to keep his veterans' spokesman even after that Liberal MP slammed veterans as recently as last week. In the latest gaffe he said:

A lot of the veterans were in the army. We taught them one skill: to kill or be killed, to survive in order to be able to kill tomorrow....

Who could forget the same Liberal MP going on national television on Remembrance Day, saying that giving money to injured veterans was:

...like hanging a case of beer in front of a drunk.... They get the lump sum, they go and spend it,...on booze or addiction.

As a veteran of the RCMP who, like many other military veterans, struggles with PTSD every day, I find these comments to be disrespectful and uninformed.

This may be how the Liberal Party feels, but Canadians know veterans can be, and should be, trusted to manage their own finances. Canadians also know veterans have remarkable skills and experiences that organizations across all sectors would be lucky to have. Why does the Liberal Party not know it?

I call on the leader of the Liberal Party to remove his spokesman immediately.

* * *

[Translation]

MONTREAL'S FILIPINO COMMUNITY

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, after the devastating typhoon struck the Philippines, Montreal's Filipino community mobilized to help the victims.

[English]

In Pierrefonds—Dollard, the seniors of the West Island suburbs organized a clothing drive and a bowling tournament to raise funds. What is more, the Filipino-Canadian Association of West Island mobilized its members and the West Island community by launching an appeal for donations to Typhoon Haiyan relief.

Statements by Members

Also in the West Island, Filipino women's group, PINAY, held a spaghetti fundraiser at the Beaconsfield United Church. The Filipino community of St. John Fisher Parish Catholic Church will be hosting a fundraising event on December 14.

[Translation]

For its part, the Filipino Association of Montreal and Suburbs is collecting money and clothing for the victims. It is also organizing a benefit concert in Montreal this Friday.

I congratulate Montreal's Filipino community on its dedication. I invite everyone to show their support for these exemplary humanitarian efforts.

[English]

I thank them for their hard work and donations.

* * *

[Translation]

CHAMPLAIN BRIDGE

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the hon. Minister of Infrastructure, Communities and Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec made an important announcement about the future of the current Champlain Bridge.

On the weekend, a team of skilled engineers set out to install a superbeam, an exceptional bit of maintenance work that went off without a hitch. This allowed traffic to return to normal, which will help people who use the bridge get to work on time and maximize their time with their families.

Our government has also announced that the new bridge over the St. Lawrence will be delivered in 2018 instead of 2021. What is more, the architectural criteria will be established by an engineering firm in Montreal in collaboration with a world-renowned Danish expert.

These new developments address the concerns of the Montreal community and are another testament to our government's determination to ensure the viability of the current bridge and to have a new bridge built as soon as possible.

* * *

[English]

MEDALS OF BRAVERY

Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate constituents Captain Frank Skinner from Burgeo, Ben Savory from Port aux Basques, Tom Upwards from Rose Blanche, and Ed Strickland from Kippens, who recently received medals of bravery for their life-saving efforts at sea on September 21, 2004.

That night, Ed received a call from the Canadian Coast Guard coordinator in St. John's, notifying him that a 45-foot yacht had been stranded with a lost rudder as a result of Hurricane Ivan. Using critical local knowledge, the maritime rescue sub-centre—which the federal government, by the way, has since closed—contacted Ed

because the water was too rough for the only vessel that search and rescue had in the area.

Frank, Ben and Tom joined Ed and sprang into action, despite ocean swells between 10 and 12 metres high and wind gusts of up to 96 kilometres an hour. Sixteen hours after leaving shore the crew finally made it back to Stephenville at 8 a.m. the next day, with the five stranded passengers aboard and the yacht in tow.

I ask all members to join me in acknowledging the brave actions of Captain Frank Skinner, Ben Savory, Tom Upwards and Ed Strickland.

* * *

●(1415)

PRIVY COUNCIL OF CANADA

Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP): Mr. Speaker, who can forget Harry Whittington, the wealthy 78-year-old Austin businessman who in 2006 got himself in between Dick Cheney's shotgun and some quail? After being shot in the face, Mr. Whittington famously apologized, saying, "My family and I are deeply sorry for all that vice president Cheney has had to go through this...week."

That brings us to last night. It has long been PMO policy to delete emails of departed staffers. Despite this, Privy Council quietly released a letter late Sunday night saying:

We regret that we previously failed...to accurately inform you and the PMO about the availability of Mr. Perrin's emails. We apologize for any inconvenience it may have caused.

It seems the Prime Minister and his gang will do almost anything to avoid taking responsibility for the PMO-orchestrated cover-up. They will even force others to apologize to them for making their own mistakes. Canadians deserve better.

* * *

UKRAINE

Mr. Bernard Trottier (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this weekend we saw hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians protest against their government's decision to suspend economic co-operation negotiations with the European Union. These people were peacefully exercising their democratic rights in Kiev's Independence Square, but Ukrainian authorities used heavy-handed methods to disperse them.

We condemn in the strongest terms the violence by the authorities against these peaceful protestors. Freedom of speech and freedom of assembly are fundamental tenets of any truly democratic country.

This weekend I met and shared my concerns with Ukrainian Canadians in Etobicoke—Lakeshore, who were exercising their freedoms, demonstrating outside the Ukrainian consulate in solidarity with those in Ukraine.

We call upon the government of Ukraine to not only respect but protect the rights of its citizens to express their opinions freely. Our government stands with the people of Ukraine to build a society based on freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since its inception, Canada has been a strong supporter of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. Support for this organization is in line with the Prime Minister's announcement in the Speech from the Throne that maternal, newborn and child health is the flagship priority for Canada's international engagement.

To that end, the Minister of International Development reaffirmed our outstanding, long-standing commitment this morning with the announcement of \$650 million over the next three years.

The global fund is getting real results, saving approximately 100,000 lives, preventing thousands of newborn infections each month, and providing 2.1 million pregnant women living with HIV with the necessary treatment.

This is real action and we are delivering concrete results.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

ETHICS

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Good to go.

Mr. Speaker, three months ago, the RCMP asked the Prime Minister for emails from his own lawyer, Ben Perrin. The RCMP's office answered that unfortunately, all of those emails had been destroyed. Why did the government change its story once again?

• (1420)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me quote from the letter the Privy Council Office wrote to Assistant Commissioner Michaud:

In September 2013, in connection with your investigation, the PMO asked the PCO to make available to the RCMP the emails of certain individuals requested by the RCMP. That list included Mr. Perrin. In response to that request, we advised PMO, who we understand informed the RCMP, that Mr. Perrin's emails had been deleted from the server and were no longer available.

We learned several days ago that that is not, in fact, the case.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, "unrelated litigation": that is today. What unrelated litigation was the Prime Minister's lawyer, Ben Perrin, involved in?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am neither a litigator nor a litigant, so I cannot answer that question. What I can tell him is that the Prime Minister's Office had indicated to the PCO that it should transmit all emails requested by the national police force.

In this letter, the chronicle of the events that happened since that time is clearly laid out for the Leader of the Opposition to read. I encourage him to do so.

[Translation]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, how could the emails from the Prime Minister's lawyer, Ben Perrin, just disappear for three months? How could they have

Oral Questions

disappeared when, in fact, they were being retained for unrelated litigation? Can the minister explain that to us?

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member would have the explanation he is looking for if he had merely read the letter the PCO published.

It says here:

It is the operating protocol of the [Privy Council Office] to close and delete email accounts of departing employees of the PCO and the PMO as a matter of course. Consistent with this protocol, upon Mr. Perrin's departure at the end of his employment in late March 2013, the PMO was provided a notice that his emails had been deleted from the computer server.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, actually, what we are talking about is the operating protocol of the Prime Minister's Office, which is to deny until they get caught and then change their story. Would it not be easier for them just to table the emails here in Parliament? Would that not be easier?

How can Canadians be assured of the integrity of any of this evidence when the Conservative government has been withholding it for three months?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member's question is, once again, counter-factual. Allow me to quote directly from the RCMP's "Information to Obtain" document, which said that:

...[the] legal representative for the PMO, advised my office that he had clear orders from the Prime Minister to provide complete cooperation with the investigation, and to provide any assistance or documentation the RCMP requested.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, "counter-factual" reminds me of Watergate, when we were told the previous evidence was no longer operative, whatever that meant.

[Translation]

For three months, the RCMP, the Mounties, have been asking the Prime Minister for those emails. How, exactly, on Sunday night, did the Conservatives finally find the emails from the Prime Minister's lawyer, Ben Perrin, after telling the RCMP that the emails had been deleted? Can the minister explain that to us?

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the operative word is "read". That is the verb the member should employ with regard to this letter, which says:

On November 28, 2013, the PMO relayed the request to the PCO to confirm our prior advice on the availability of Mr. Perrin's emails.

In response to this inquiry, on November 29, 2013 we found that Mr. Perrin's emails had in fact been retained due to a litigation hold in an unrelated matter. On learning that Mr. Perrin's emails were in fact available, we informed the PMO on November 30, 2013. The PMO and the PCO agreed to inform you [the RCMP] as soon as possible.

Oral Questions

• (1425)

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for months, the Prime Minister told us that the emails from his own lawyer, Benjamin Perrin, had been deleted. We now know that was not true.

We already know his staff had no ethical difficulty in attempting to pay off a senator or whitewash a Senate report, so considering the lack of trust that Canadians have in the Prime Minister and his office, can the Prime Minister assure Canadians that no member of his staff had access to these emails from Mr. Perrin and were able to delete, doctor, alter, or whitewash Mr. Perrin's emails as well?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, as this letter from the independent, non-partisan Privy Council Office indicates, the Prime Minister's Office just learned of the continued existence of these emails. As soon as it did so, the Prime Minister said that the information should be shared with the RCMP and the existence of the emails should be made public, as it was yesterday.

[Translation]

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister told us that he did not have Benjamin Perrin's emails, when the opposite was true. He waited six months to finally tell the truth.

Benjamin Perrin was involved in the Mike Duffy deal, and the PMO tried to cover up the illegal repayments.

Can the Prime Minister confirm that no one in his office had access to those emails and that no one was able to doctor them or remove them from the Privy Council Office?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have here the letter that was provided by the Privy Council. I have quoted from it, and I will do so again:

[English]

We regret that we previously failed, even if inadvertently, to accurately inform you and the PMO about the availability of Mr. Perrin's emails. We apologize for any inconvenience it may have caused.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a Prime Minister in this situation who cares about ethics would have investigated all of the actions of his office and made public all of the relevant documents. That would have been behaviour respectful of Canadians. Instead, the Prime Minister denies until the RCMP digs deep enough and he has no other choice but to confess the truth. It looks a bit like the Rob Ford crisis management strategy.

Is the Prime Minister waiting to be called as a witness in a criminal trial to finally make public all of the relevant documents so that Canadians can see the extent of this cover-up?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, no.

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are not buying the Prime Minister's story, and they are not satisfied with the Conservatives' claim that only Nigel Wright and Mike Duffy are responsible.

Does the Prime Minister believe that Senator Carolyn Stewart Olsen told the full truth to the RCMP, and will there be any consequences for this Conservative senator if she did not?

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, of course, the RCMP is continuing to look into this matter. I trust that the RCMP will do the job Canadians expect it to do.

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, while the Conservatives claim that this is all Nigel Wright's fault, the RCMP is investigating the actions of over a dozen different Conservatives.

Senator Stewart Olsen told the police that no one ordered her to whitewash the Senate report, but in an email to Nigel Wright, she wrote, "Hi Nigel, just a quick note to say that I am always ready to do exactly what is asked...".

Will the senator face any consequences from the Prime Minister for making these misleading statements to the RCMP?

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the House knows, and as I have said on a number of occasions in the House, each of us as parliamentarians, whether we are in the House of Commons or elevated to the Senate, is in charge of making our own decisions with respect to the files that we handle.

At the same time, the RCMP continues to investigate, and I trust that it will get the information it requires.

[Translation]

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on June 21, Carolyn Stewart Olsen told the police that the Senate report on Mike Duffy was prepared without any input from the Prime Minister's Office. However, the RCMP's documentation shows that, on the contrary, she was given instructions by employees of the Prime Minister's Office. Mr. Wright and Mr. Duffy suffered consequences as a result of their actions.

What consequences will be faced by Senator Stewart Olsen, who was caught lying in her testimony to the police?

• (1430)

[English]

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): As you know, Mr. Speaker, the RCMP is continuing to investigate this matter. What is also quite clear is that the Prime Minister's Office is continuing to assist the RCMP in this investigation, but also, the RCMP has identified Nigel Wright and Senator Duffy as the main subjects of this current investigation.

[Translation]

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Senator Stewart Olsen told the RCMP that she remembered communicating with Nigel Wright only once, at a meeting last April, to provide him with an update on the audit. However, the email record clearly shows that she was in contact with him on a fairly regular basis. This once again proves that she lied to the authorities.

How is her behaviour more acceptable than Mr. Wright's or Mr. Duffy's? Why is she getting the royal treatment like Gerstein?

Oral Questions

[English]

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Of course, Mr. Speaker, the emails she refers to are part of the hundreds of emails that were released by the Prime Minister's Office. As we have said, the Prime Minister's Office would be assisting, and that is the standard we have continued to see. At the same time, the RCMP is investigating. It is looking into this. Senator Duffy and Nigel Wright are the main focus of the investigation right now, and we trust that the RCMP will continue its work.

[Translation]

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, at the recent Conservative convention, Senator Irving Gerstein said that he had never approved the use of party money to repay Mike Duffy. However, that is also a lie. Last winter, he approved the repayment of Mike Duffy's legal expenses and his inappropriate claims. Senator Gerstein was even prepared to write Mr. Duffy a cheque for \$30,000.

Why is Senator Gerstein allowed to lie when Mr. Duffy and Mr. Wright are not?

[English]

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative Party did not pay back the expenses of Senator Duffy. As the Prime Minister has said in the House on a number of occasions, it would not be unusual for the party to assist members if they require legal assistance. It is the exact same standard the Leader of the Opposition seemed to have used when he asked his party to pay his legal expenses, unlike our side. We do not pay the judgments of hundreds of thousands of dollars, like the Leader of the Opposition asked his party to pay for.

[Translation]

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): That is not all, Mr. Speaker. Irving Gerstein did not just lie. He also tried to manipulate the audit report of Senate expenses.

Can the Prime Minister tell us how many times Senator Gerstein called his accomplice at Deloitte, Michael Runia, to talk about this audit?

[English]

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, of course, I would not have any information with respect to how many times Senator Duffy called. I noted that in the emails that were received by the RCMP, it would appear to be one time, but I have not spoken to Senator Duffy with respect to this particular matter. That would obviously be inappropriate, in light of the fact that there is an RCMP investigation going on.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is really hard to believe that the Privy Council of Canada would fumble a request from the RCMP to gain access to Ben Perrin's emails. He is the key link between the Prime Minister and the cover-up. He negotiated the five-point deal with Mike Duffy, and he was involved in the negotiation of the \$90,000 payoff.

Now that his emails have been suddenly liberated, will the government tell us, when was the last time the Prime Minister spoke with his legal counsel, Ben Perrin?

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Obviously, Mr. Speaker, I would have no knowledge of when the Prime Minister last spoke to Mr. Perrin, but what is very clear also, again today, is the level of co-operation the Prime Minister's Office is providing to the RCMP. When the Privy Council followed up and found its mistake in not having previously released Ben Perrin's emails, the Prime Minister's Office immediately took the initiative to make sure that the RCMP had access to them.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to be helpful to my friend from Oak Ridges—Markham, but if he does not know the answers, then why are the Conservatives putting him up? Is he not their spokesman?

It seems awfully strange that the government would tell the RCMP it deleted the emails of the Prime Minister's legal counsel, and then when push comes to shove, the emails reappear. Is it the Conservatives' policy to make the electronic legal correspondence of the Prime Minister's lawyer disappear, or do they only disappear emails from people who were involved in the Duffy cover-up?

• (1435)

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again, the assistant secretary to the cabinet was very clear with respect to the unfortunate error that occurred on this. There are of course Treasury Board guidelines in place that govern how emails are handled when employees leave. However, again, as soon as these emails were discovered, Privy Council contacted the RCMP to ensure it had access to these emails.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if there is an issue of competency, maybe the Conservatives want to invite Dalton McGuinty over to help them figure out how to deal with their email problems in the PCO.

If the Conservatives cannot explain how the legal emails to the Prime Minister's lawyer would suddenly disappear, and now they thought which was lost, as the Bible says, has suddenly been found, maybe we will go to a simpler question.

When the Prime Minister got rid of his lawyer in March 2012, was Ben Perrin fired, or did he leave on his own accord? Under what terms did Ben Perrin leave the Prime Minister's Office?

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my understanding that Ben Perrin left the Prime Minister's Office to seek a career as a professor at, I believe, the University of British Columbia. I would invite the hon. member to Google his name and see at which institution he is working.

Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week we learned that Michael Runia, senior partner at Deloitte, interfered in the Duffy audit by calling the lead forensic auditor on the file. Mr. Runia is also the auditor of the Conservative Fund Canada and he made that call because Senator Irving Gerstein put him up to it.

Oral Questions

To help the Senate investigate this breach in the integrity of its audit, will the government support calling Mr. Runia to testify before a Senate hearing?

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again, the Senate is in control of its own affairs and will do what it deems important.

However, what we saw last week was the Senate Board of Internal Economy invite the three auditors who were in charge of this audit in front of it. It asked to ensure that the audit was done with complete confidentiality in that Canadians and, equally important, that the Senators could have confidence in the work they did. Those three auditors confirmed the same and it would appear the Senate was comfortable with that answer and has taken no further action.

[*Translation*]

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, despite these serious allegations, Senator Gerstein is still the chair of the Standing Senate Committee on Banking and Commerce. Last week in committee, Conservative senators blocked a motion to hear testimony from Michael Runia, bizarrely claiming it was not their role to investigate the integrity of an audit that they themselves had commissioned.

Will the government therefore agree to support a Liberal Senate motion to hear testimony from Mr. Runia and will it ask Senator Gerstein to give testimony as well?

[*English*]

The Speaker: I am not sure if there was anything in that question about administrative responsibility of the government. It sounds like maybe a question to be posed in the other place.

I see the hon. member for Ottawa South has a supplementary item. I encourage him to ensure he is touching on the administrative responsibilities of the government.

The hon. member for Ottawa South.

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, section 16 of the Parliament of Canada Act is explicit. It is illegal for anyone to offer a senator a payment or inducement for anything related to his or her duties as a senator.

According to RCMP records, in February a secret payment funded by the Conservative Party was offered to Senator Duffy. It is perfectly clear. Several PMO staffers and Senator Irving Gerstein were in on the deal.

Has the Attorney General of Canada asked the RCMP to investigate these individuals? If not, why not?

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the RCMP had been investigating this matter for some months now. At the same time, it is evident that the Conservative Party did not pay the expenses of Senator Duffy. The RCMP documents also clearly indicate that it is both Nigel Wright and Senator Duffy who are the subjects of the current investigation.

[*Translation*]

CHAMPLAIN BRIDGE

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for years, successive governments have ignored the under-investment in our infrastructure, including the Champlain Bridge. Instead of working on a plan for replacing the bridge and making appropriate investments, the government built a superbeam five years ago to patch a potential crack.

Getting a new bridge sooner, as the NDP has been calling for, is good, but can the minister tell us how he is going to cut three years off the project?

• (1440)

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Infrastructure, Communities and Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this will give me the chance to say that on the weekend, the team from Jacques Cartier and Champlain Bridges Incorporated, together with a number of private-sector partners, did an excellent job despite temperatures of -20° and a howling wind to boot. They managed to install a structure that is reinforcing the bridge. We have already invested \$380 million to make the current bridge safe. They voted against all that money. It is irresponsible.

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we voted against that money because there was nothing for the new Champlain Bridge in the budget.

This did not magically become an urgent matter. Damning reports kept piling up while cabinet ministers responsible for transport and infrastructure were twiddling their thumbs. This mismanagement is why Arup was hired without a tendering process. It is time to show some transparency.

Can the minister confirm that the tendering processes for the new bridge will be open, transparent and competitive?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Infrastructure, Communities and Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that hon. member just said that they voted against money for maintaining the current bridge because there was no money for the new bridge. I am not sure if he realizes that.

That hon. member represents the people of Brossard—La Prairie, near the bridge, but the current bridge is not important to him. We should be investing in the new bridge instead.

Before building a new bridge, we are going to maintain the one we have and do the necessary work.

[*English*]

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, people should not have to pray before they cross the Champlain Bridge.

The minister has been responsible for the bridge for two and a half years, yet not a single dime was in the last two budgets for the new bridge, not a single dime.

Could the minister tell the House where the money is for a new bridge. Show us the money.

Oral Questions

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Infrastructure, Communities and Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first, the Champlain Bridge is still serving the population and will for many years to come. We have to ensure we keep the bridge functioning and safe and keep the traffic moving.

We considered it was more important for the moment to keep the bridge safe and we have done so with the JCCBI Corporation, which is doing a great job in keeping the bridge in good shape.

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AVIATION SECURITY

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Lac-Mégantic tragedy happened when companies were allowed to cut their staff and regulate themselves. Under the Conservatives, the same thing is happening in the airline industry: fewer flight attendants to serve and protect the passengers. Canadians do not want a Lac-Mégantic tragedy in the sky. How can the Conservatives justify fewer flight attendants to lead people to safety in the event of an accident?

Could the minister report to the House the result of the test to give Sunwing the approval to cut flight attendants?

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the standard of one flight attendant for 50 seats is actually used in the United States and Europe and that is what is carried every day. In fact, it is a ratio that is endorsed by the International Civil Aviation Organization.

However, in this case, there is outstanding litigation and as such we cannot comment any further.

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VETERANS AFFAIRS

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are saddened to learn of the passing of a great Canadian.

Cliff Chadderton passed away on Saturday at the age of 94, leaving behind family and a grieving veterans community. Would the minister please remind the House why Cliff Chadderton was such a remarkable veteran and Canadian?

Hon. Julian Fantino (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Cliff Chadderton was the long-serving chief executive officer of The War Amps, chairman of the National Council of Veteran Associations and a D-Day veteran.

Being severely injured in World War II, he returned to Canada, not with defeat in his eyes, but with inspiration that he could make things better for others.

We all send our deepest condolences to the Chadderton family and thank Cliff for his remarkable contribution to our great country.

• (1445)

[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENSE

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the recent revelations that the NSA carried out spy operations in Canada during the G8 and G20 summits are disturbing.

We have the right to know what the Conservative government knew about this. It is illegal for CSEC to spy on Canadians. That is why we want to know what kind of agreement the Canadian and American authorities had.

Did someone from Communications Security Establishment Canada or the government give the authorization to participate in these operations?

[English]

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I cannot comment on specific foreign intelligence activities or capabilities. That being said, as I pointed out before, this organization is prohibited from targeting Canadians. Furthermore, it cannot ask our international partners to act in a way that circumvents Canadian laws. I am sure that will satisfy the hon. member.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the only thing the Conservatives seem clear on is that it is illegal for CSEC to spy on Canadians. However, they continue to duck the question of whether they actually allowed the Americans to do the spying for them.

This agency, the Communications Security Establishment, costs taxpayers millions every year. Why are the Conservatives refusing to ensure that it answers to the public. Why are they afraid of greater public oversight over CSEC's operations?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is oversight of CSEC. There is an independent commissioner. I would point out for the hon. member that for the last 16 years the commissioner has indicated that CSEC has complied with Canadian laws. I hope that satisfies the hon. member.

* * *

PRIVACY

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, he also said that there was a need for an oversight body.

Canadians also have good reason to be concerned about what the government is doing when it comes to their personal information.

Let us take the story of Ellen Richardson. She was flying down to the states for a 10-day Caribbean vacation, but never made it. She was denied entry into the United States. The agent said that it was because of her previous hospitalization for depression, information that should have been private. She was stunned.

Could the minister explain to the House how a U.S. border agent would know about a Canadian's private medical history?

Oral Questions

Ms. Eve Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is obviously committed to ensuring the privacy of all Canadians' health files. I will take this issue under advisement and provide some further information.

I want to assure all Canadians that our government takes very seriously the privacy and confidentiality of all Canadians' health information.

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that answer does not actually help Mrs. Richardson. She did not tell anyone about her hospitalization in 2012. She thought it was a private matter, so how did this information end up in a U.S. security database? Canadians hearing Mrs. Richardson's story are beginning to wonder how much of their own private medical information is being shared with foreign governments.

How is it possible a Canadian citizen's medical information would have been shared with U.S. authorities? What is the minister doing to get to the bottom of it?

Ms. Eve Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have indicated, I do not have information on this specific case. I can say, though, that health information obviously is a provincial responsibility and our government does very much respect the privacy and confidentiality of Canadians' health records.

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VETERANS AFFAIRS

Hon. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week we had three members of the military who committed suicide. Clearly, we are not looking after our military. Nine veterans affairs centres will be closed by the end of January and 17,000 veterans will be deprived of their case managers.

The minister is letting one case manager per centre move into the local Service Canada office. With veterans already being told that there is no one to talk to them, how does the minister expect veterans to get the services they need, the services we owe them and they deserve?

Hon. Julian Fantino (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, among the variety of options available to veterans, Veterans Affairs Canada case workers and nurses do personalized home visits for those who need them. While the member opposite engages in scare tactics, we will continue to deliver services and support our veterans no matter where they live and will do that ongoing. If they need assistance among many services, we will cut their grass, shovel their snow and clean their homes. That is our commitment to veterans and that good work continues.

* * *

HEALTH

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the British Columbia government funds the BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS' highly active antiretroviral therapy as treatment and prevention because it decreases the transmission of HIV. The World Health Organization endorses it. The U.S., the U.K., France and Brazil have begun national programs.

B.C. is the only region in North America where HIV rates are decreasing. Why does the Minister of Health still refuse to meet with the BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS or promote treatment as prevention for the rest of Canada?

• (1450)

Ms. Eve Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it was World AIDS Day this past weekend. As members will recall, last week we made a \$10-million announcement to invest in a cure for AIDS.

Our government is also supporting the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to accelerate the development of a safe, effective and affordable HIV vaccine.

Our government's commitment to assisting those who are suffering with AIDS is very clear.

* * *

[Translation]

PRIVACY

Ms. Charmaine Borg (Terrebonne—Blainville, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we recently learned that the Conservatives planned on spying on Canadians' Facebook and Twitter accounts 24/7.

These are the same Conservatives who refuse to give information on their budget spending, the same ones who refuse to answer our questions on the Senate scandal. We cannot know what they know, but they want to know what people are tweeting.

Is monitoring Facebook and Twitter accounts truly the best use of taxpayers' money?

[English]

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member is not a rookie when it comes to social media, so she would know anything posted on Facebook or Twitter is public information. In fact, most people are on Facebook or Twitter to be read, to be seen, to be part of the dialogue. We want to be there too.

Mr. Dan Harris (Scarborough Southwest, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that is all fine and good to make a joke out of it, but Canadians posted on social media—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Scarborough Southwest still has the floor.

The hon. member.

Mr. Dan Harris: Mr. Speaker, they seem to have caught something over there. I wonder if it is contagious.

Canadians posting on social media do not expect to be monitored by their government. They imagine that perhaps the Conservatives might have better things to do than follow their tweets and Facebook posts. Social media monitoring is a problematic use of government resources.

We know the Conservatives like to keep lists, so thanks to the new Twitter monitoring program, how many more Canadians are going to wind up on the Conservatives' enemies list?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the whole point of social media is to have dialogue on public policy issues. That is why it is important to understand what people are thinking or saying about certain issues on Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram. My handle is @TonyclementCPC, if anyone wants notes. It is not a state secret.

The whole point of social media is to engage in a dialogue with citizens, and that means better public policies in the end.

* * *

[Translation]

CHAMPLAIN BRIDGE

Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Minister of Infrastructure, Communities and Intergovernmental Affairs made an important announcement for the greater Montreal area.

Could the minister share this good news with us?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Infrastructure, Communities and Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since we announced construction of the new bridge, I have always maintained that we are working on reducing the time required to build it, and we have already reduced it by six months. Then yesterday, we announced that the bridge will be ready three years in advance, and will open in 2018 for the well-being of the many people living in the Montreal area.

Naturally, I would like to congratulate The Jacques Cartier and Champlain Bridges Incorporated and all workers who worked on the weekend to install the superbeam to strengthen the bridge. I want to thank everyone for their patience.

Together with our partners, we will deliver a new bridge over the St. Lawrence.

* * *

[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the latest Snowden releases raise serious concerns about Canadian involvement in spying at the G20 meetings. The documents clearly show NSA support planning has been closely coordinated with its Canadian partner. That is with its Canadian partner. Either someone in the government authorized the illegal spying, or we have a rogue spy agency operating without any oversight.

Oral Questions

Will the minister now support the establishment of a national oversight committee of parliamentarians so that this rogue spying does not continue?

• (1455)

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to assure this individual that there already is an independent watchdog, the commissioner of the Communications Security Establishment, who has access to all the documents related to the operations of the agency and its personnel.

As a former solicitor general, the individual will be very pleased to confirm and recognize that for 16 years the commissioner has reported that CSEC continues to act lawfully in the conduct of its activities. That should give him some confidence and help.

* * *

[Translation]

QUEBEC BRIDGE

Mr. Denis Blanchette (Louis-Hébert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week, my colleague asked a serious question about the state of the Quebec bridge. The member for Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière would only say that it is not his responsibility. The bridge is CN property, and CN is regulated by Transport Canada. Safety of this bridge is therefore a federal responsibility. Transport Canada has a report indicating that the bridge's deterioration is accelerating.

Will the Conservatives stop hiding behind their legal battle with CN and give us the most recent information on the state of the bridge?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is absolutely correct. The owner of the bridge is Canadian National. That is who is responsible for the maintenance and safety.

However, to ensure that this commitment of Canadian National is backed up, the government has initiated litigation. That litigation is currently under way, and we are demanding that CN fully restore this bridge.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Blake Richards (Wild Rose, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while the NDP continues to oppose our government's responsible plan to support job creation and economic growth, its only suggestion is to raise taxes.

As if imposing a job-killing carbon tax was not enough, just last week, the NDP leader confirmed his intention to impose a multi-billion-dollar tax hike on job creators. What is more, he wants to do this while we continue to cope with the challenging global economy.

Could the Minister of State for finance please update this House on the state of Canada's economy and what our government is doing to support job creation?

Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Wild Rose for that great question. It is a tough question, but fair.

Oral Questions

It is also good to see that there is one party in this House that does care about the economy. Indeed, last week Statistics Canada released a report saying that for the ninth consecutive quarter, the Canadian economy has shown growth, this time by 2.7%.

Although this is very encouraging, the global economy remains fragile. That is why our government is taking the needed action of implementing measures such as the hiring tax credit for small business as well as freezing EI rates.

This government will continue to bring forward programs that will help create jobs and build this economy.

* * *

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, here is yet another minor amendment by the Conservative government: the Conservatives' Bill C-4 will eliminate the Canada Employment Insurance Financing Board.

The board's main mission was to guarantee that EI contributions were used solely for the purposes of the program. The decision to kill this institution is therefore worrisome, but I admit, not very surprising, coming from the Conservatives.

With the demise of this institution, is the minister telling us that the EI funding surplus will now be administered by his office, with no accountability?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, frankly that question makes no sense at all.

Contributions to the employment insurance fund are intended to provide benefits and training for workers.

My office is in no way involved in the administration of the fund, which is independently conducted by public servants. This works very well for the unemployed. It provides assistance when they are out of a job.

As everyone knows, the government froze EI contributions so that it can continue creating jobs in the Canadian economy.

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AIR TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when a developer wants to build an airport in Alberta, federal ministers worry about the consequences for Albertans, the environment and even birds.

However, when a developer wants to build an airport in Neuville, Quebec, the situation is radically different. Conservative ministers in Quebec refuse to seriously consider the consequences for Quebecers and close their eyes to the significant safety problems.

Will Quebec ministers finally stand up for the people of Quebec and demand that the Minister of Transport make the same provisions for Neuville as she would for Alberta?

• (1500)

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in both of these cases the exact same process and procedure was followed, and that was to consult with the local municipality or the local government with respect to the proposed aerodrome.

In the case of Alberta, we heard very clearly from the municipality and from the county that they had concerns about it.

In the case of Neuville, in fact a memorandum of understanding was signed with the operator of the aerodrome, accepting this aerodrome in the area.

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[Translation]

INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in just 110 days, Ottawa will impose its housing-first approach to homelessness, which will force Quebec to sacrifice its expertise and programs tailored to its needs.

In front of the Parliament buildings tomorrow, at the request of Réseau Solidarité itinérance du Québec, representatives from related organizations will be calling for a Quebec-specific approach to homelessness, which has the full support of the National Assembly.

Will the minister take advantage of the fact that these experts on homelessness will be here tomorrow to announce that Quebec and its agencies will be given the freedom to use their expertise and do as they see fit?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the housing-first approach is a successful, evidence-based model. It will deliver the best results for society's most vulnerable.

For example, 80% of the people placed in the Montreal pilot project still have housing two years later. Those results match the results in France and Finland.

The opposition keep saying that we need evidence-based policies. That is the case with the housing-first approach, which works well for the homeless.

* * *

[English]

TAXATION

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives have increased taxes on small businesses and the middle class while giving huge tax breaks to large multinational corporations at less than half the rate in the U.S.A. In 2014, for the first time ever, more than half of federal revenue will come from personal income taxes.

When will the Minister of Finance stop increasing taxes on small business and the middle class and put Canadians ahead of oil companies?

Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, we certainly recognize the vital role of small business in the economy and job creation. That is why, since 2006, we have lowered the average small business tax bill by over \$28,000, or over 30%. That includes such tax cuts as reducing the small business tax rate from 12% to 11%.

We are going to continue to do what we need to do to bring forward jobs and help build this economy.

The Speaker: That concludes question period for today.

I see the hon. member rising on a point of order, but before I hear him, I understand there have been consultations among the parties and I would therefore invite all hon. members to rise for a minute of silence to commemorate the passing, on Saturday, November 30, of World War II veteran and former War Amps of Canada CEO Cliff Chadderton.

[A moment of silence observed]

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of the Honourable Robin Campbell, Minister of Aboriginal Relations for the Province of Alberta.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

• (1505)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Scarborough—Agincourt is rising on a point of order.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Mr. Speaker, in conversation and consultation with the member for Sackville—Eastern Shore and the Minister of Veterans Affairs, I believe you will find unanimous consent that the House holds a one minute silence in commemoration of the three service personnel who died last week.

The Speaker: Does the member have the unanimous consent of the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: There is no consent.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

WAYS AND MEANS

NOTICE OF MOTION

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to rise at this time to table the notice of a ways and means motion to introduce an act to give effect to the governance agreement with Sioux Valley Dakota Nation and to make consequential amendments to other acts. I do that in both languages.

I ask that a day be designated for consideration of the motion.

Routine Proceedings

SIoux VALLEY DAKOTA NATION GOVERNANCE AGREEMENT

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to table the Sioux Valley Dakota Nation Governance Agreement and Tripartite Governance Agreement in both official languages.

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ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Mark Strahl (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I have to honour to table, in both official languages, four separate reports.

The first is the 2011-12 annual report of the Labrador and Inuit Land Claims Agreement implementation coordinating committee.

The second report I wish to table is the copy of the 2013 Annual Report of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation.

Thirdly, I have the copies of the 2010-11 Annual Report on the State of Inuit Culture and Society in the Nunavut Settlement Area to table.

The final report that I would like to table is the 2010-11 Nisga'a Final Agreement report.

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GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 35 petitions.

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INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation to the 43rd British Islands and Mediterranean Regional Conference, held in Stanley, the Falkland Islands.

Pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, respecting its participation in the mid-year EXCO meeting, held in Grand Cayman, Cayman Islands.

Pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, respecting its participation in the 62nd Westminster Seminar on Parliamentary Practice and Procedures, held in London, United Kingdom.

Finally, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, respecting its participation in the mid-year EXCO meeting, held in Ezulwini, Lobamba, Swaziland.

Routine Proceedings

Mr. Ed Holder (London West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the report of the Canada-United Kingdom Inter-Parliamentary Association, respecting its participation in the bilateral visit to Scotland and London, United Kingdom.

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Gordon Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage in relation to the supplementary estimates (B), 2013-14, votes 1b, 5b, 10b, 50b, 65b and 70b under Canadian Heritage.

● (1510)

ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development in relation to the supplementary estimates (B), 2013-14, votes 1b, 5b, 10b and 20b under Environment.

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Committee on National Defence, entitled “NATO's Strategic Concept and Canada's Role in International Defence Cooperation”. Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive report and response to this report.

As well, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the second report of the Standing Committee on National Defence, entitled “Supplementary Estimates (B) 2013-14, votes 1b, 5b, 20b and 25b under National Defence”.

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, entitled “Supplementary Estimates (B) 2013-14”.

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the third report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, entitled “Review of the Board of Internal Economy”.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the official opposition NDP, we will be filing a dissenting report on this report from the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, and it is very clear why.

What Canadians have been saying right across the country is that we need to bring an end to self-policing of MPs' expenses. Yet, we have had the Conservative government and Liberal members saying that self-policing is just fine. We disagree, and we are going to continue to fight on behalf of Canadians.

We are also going to follow up on what the Auditor General so clearly said, which is that having an independent oversight body would be in Canadians' interests. He also said very clearly, even though Conservatives disagree, that the Auditor General needed a mandate to look at MPs' expense.

Finally, the Information Commissioner said that the law on access to information should apply to the House of Commons. We are saying that should happen too.

We are going to continue to stand up for Canadians, and we are going to bring in—

The Speaker: Order, please.

Are these points of order that members are rising on?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I have something to add.

The Speaker: As much as I am sure the hon. member is eager to add to what the member for Burnaby—New Westminster has just said, the rules do not allow for him to do that. However, there may be opportunities in the future. If the motion to concur in the report is called, I am sure the member will be able to add his remarks then.

The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands is rising on a point of order.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I wish to ask for a clarification. This is the first time I have found myself in a position where a member in my situation was actually able, collectively with the other members in my situation, to table a further dissent.

I wonder if that is permitted to be discussed at this point or not. It is to the same report.

The Speaker: I can provide that clarification. The rules of our House allow for the official opposition to table a minority report, which has just happened, so it is time to move on.

There are not opportunities for other members to table other dissenting reports, at least not at this time. As I said, if and when the motion to concur in the report that was just tabled is called, I am sure members will have the ability to add their thoughts to the record.

The Speaker: Pursuant to an order made Thursday, November 28, 2013, the 42nd report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs presented to the House in the first session of the 41st Parliament is deemed presented.

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NAVIGABLE WATERS PROTECTION ACT

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-557, An Act to amend the Navigable Waters Protection Act (Vancouver Island).

Routine Proceedings

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce An Act to amend the Navigable Waters Protection Act (Vancouver Island). I am introducing this bill today in an attempt to counteract some of the negative consequences of the Conservatives' second budget bill, which removed all environmental protection for each and every lake, river and stream on Vancouver Island. This bill would restore that protection which is so important to the future salmon runs, to recreation and to tourism on central and northern Vancouver Island, by specifically protecting Nimpkish Lake, Owikeno Lake, Horne Lake, Kennedy Lake, Great Central Lake, Sproat Lake and the Campbell River.

This bill complements the bill I introduced previously to provide similar protection for the Goldstream River in my own riding.

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

• (1515)

Hon. Wayne Easter: Mr. Speaker, I rise to seek unanimous consent of the House for the following motion, that Bill C-551, An Act to establish the National Security Committee of Parliamentarians be deemed read a second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security.

The reason for this motion is that there is growing concern as to the accountability of our intelligence agencies and the proposal contained in this legislation would provide oversight. It was crafted with the current Minister of National Defence and the current—

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: There is no consent.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

The Speaker: Pursuant to an order made Thursday, November 28, 2013, the 42nd report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, presented to the House in the first session of the 41st Parliament is deemed moved and seconded.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to stand to speak to the 42nd report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

I should say at the outset that this was a really fascinating study. Although it is very complex and at times the study seemed to raise more questions than it offered answers, I think the committee did an exemplary job of trying to come forward with guidelines for procedures to assist both the Speaker and the House administration on this issue.

For the benefit of members who may not be aware of the 42nd report or for the benefit of Canadians who may be watching this debate today, I will try, in the few moments I have, to frame the

question as it occurred and then provide a brief recap of the findings of the committee.

What happened in June of 2012 was a situation that really had not been encountered before, which was that there was an access to information request of the Auditor General to release certain documents—emails, in fact—relating to the Auditor General's appearances before committees earlier that year.

Unfortunately, the request was made when the House was not sitting. Therefore, the Speaker and the House administration could not consult with members of the House, since Parliament was adjourned for the summer. In that light, Mr. Speaker, I believe you and other House administration officers did what they could only do, which was that in order to protect the parliamentary privilege rights of members, they had to refuse those documents being released.

As you well know, Mr. Speaker, and I think all members in this place know, all parliamentarians, whether in this place or the other place, are protected by parliamentary privilege. There are many good reasons for that, and I will not have to illuminate or articulate those reasons. Suffice it to say that all members are free to speak in Parliament during debate or examination in committee without fear of retribution or of having legal action taken against them. That privilege extends to discussions in committees.

When Parliament was not sitting and an access to information request was made for documents from committees, which are protected by privilege, the Speaker rightly said he was sorry, but he could not release them because he did not have the consent of the members of that committee.

There is a bit of a conflict between parliamentary privilege and the Access to Information Act. Privilege is embodied in our Constitution. It is referenced in the Constitution Act, 1867, and the Constitution Act, 1982, and, as such, since it is in the Constitution, parliamentary privilege is sacrosanct. That means that since the Constitution is the supreme law of Canada, it at all times must be observed, and those elements of the Constitution that are protected by constitutional rights have to be observed.

However, the Access to Information Act does not recognize parliamentary privilege. Parliamentary privilege is not exempted from the Access to Information Act. There are no exceptions in the Access to Information Act reflecting parliamentary privilege, so there was a conflict. On one hand, parliamentary privilege itself would prevent certain documents from being released; on the other hand, the Access to Information Act is there to provide information to Canadians who are seeking information from government, and it is a fundamental tenet of our democracy to be able to provide such information to Canadians.

Routine Proceedings

The question then became how to resolve it. In this particular case, when Parliament resumed in September of 2012, the House unanimously agreed to provide those documents that were requested through the access to information request, but it also pointed out to the Speaker and House administration the possibility for future cases coming forward. The Speaker then referred the question to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, asking for guidance on how the House should respond in the future should another example of an access to information request come forward when Parliament was not sitting.

The committee did an exhaustive study of this question. It brought forward many expert witnesses. The Information Commissioner and her legal counsel, the Clerk of the House, and the law counsel of the House of Commons all gave testimony.

● (1520)

Testimony seemed to be in conflict, because while privilege is sacrosanct and while privilege is recognized in the Constitution, the Access to Information Act states that privilege is silent within the act, so how does one reconcile these two seemingly contradictory points of view?

After much discussion and after hearing much testimony, the procedure and House affairs committee came up with some guidelines to assist you, Mr. Speaker, should the situation ever arise again. It basically identified four categories in which you could take action should a request come forward when Parliament is not sitting.

The first category deals with public and accessible documents.

In other words, if testimony or documents were provided at committee and those documents and that testimony were publicly accessible because, for example, the committee's discussions and deliberations were held in public—sometimes they were even televised—then the answer is certainly yes. The committee suggested that the House be able to release those documents when a request was made.

The second category is for documents and testimony provided during in camera discussions at committee.

Clearly, the committee felt that in camera was sufficient and that no documents or testimony, if provided during an in-camera session of a committee, should be available, even though an access to information request had come forward.

The third category is for not-publicly-accessible documents that were presented in a committee that was not in camera.

In these cases, Mr. Speaker, the committee suggested to you that those requests be considered on a case-by-case situation. In other words, if the documents dealt with sensitive information, perhaps of a personal nature or a legal nature, then those documents should not be presented or provided to those people who were making the request to begin with. However, if they were non-sensitive items, then yes, that information could be provided.

If a committee was sitting—in other words, if Parliament was in session—the committee would make that determination itself. However, if Parliament was not sitting, then it would be up to the Speaker to determine, on a case-by-case basis, whether or not to

release those documents. However, the guidelines are in place: sensitive information, documents should not be released; non-sensitive information, documents could be released by you, in your determination, Mr. Speaker.

The final category relates to documents that were prepared for testimony at committee but never presented.

Many times documents are prepared for the benefit of witnesses appearing before the committee, but those documents may never be released or discussed at the committee itself. If those documents were requested and if it was a public meeting—in other words, it was not in an in camera session—then the procedure and House affairs committee felt those documents could be released.

However, again, if the documents were presented in an in camera session, the answer would be no. Any documents or testimony presented in camera should not be released, regardless of a request through access to information.

I should also point out that privilege still remains even if documents are released. By that, I mean that documents may be presented to any member of the Canadian public who requests them, but privilege remains intact. For example, if the documents refer to commentary from a member, whether in debate or in committee, and they could be considered to be somewhat defamatory or libellous, privilege would still protect the member, even though the documents had been made public.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that is of assistance to you in future dealings of this sort and I hope the explanation has been of benefit to those members who may not have been aware of this report.

Let me finally say once again that I applaud all members of the procedure and House affairs committee for some very good work during committee.

I know there will be a dissenting report coming from members of the official opposition. I think some of the points made in that dissenting report are reasonable.

However, it just goes to show, once again, that when they want to, members can really work together well in committee, and I think it shows this Parliament is working extremely well in this regard.

● (1525)

Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to clarify that our separate report is a supplementary opinion, not a dissenting one, so the final words of my hon. friend were exactly right in that this is building on a very good committee process.

I rise today as the member of Parliament for Toronto—Danforth and as the official opposition critic for democratic and parliamentary reform to speak on the study by Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding parliamentary privilege and how access to information requests should be handled.

Routine Proceedings

Access to information is a crucial aspect of a well-functioning democracy. That is rather obvious. This spring, the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, known as PROC, studied how to proceed with the disclosure of parliamentary documents under the Access to Information Act. During the study, the NDP members of PROC sought to ensure that parliamentary privilege would not be used as a kind of cloak, ultimately, for government secrecy.

My NDP colleagues and I felt that the committee report should go just a bit further than it did. We are concurring in the report, but this is a supplementary opinion. We felt it should go a bit further than just defining Parliament's constitutional privilege and prescribing administrative solutions for the House's voluntary disclosure of documents. Rather, we thought it necessary to supplement the report by outlining the options to improve the interaction of parliamentary privilege and access to information as presented to us by various witnesses during the study, including the Information Commissioner.

In our supplementary opinion, we stressed that the exercise of Parliament's discretion to disclose documents should be weighted in favour of disclosure to the public. We clearly indicated that while we recognized that there is indeed a constitutional protection for the privileges of the House of Commons, we also believe this does not mean that the House or the Senate should automatically assert itself over another quasi-constitutional right, namely that of access to information.

It is no doubt partly because of freedom of information's connections to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and perhaps also the fact that international human rights treaties applicable to Canada protect freedom of information as part of the right to freedom of expression—for example, article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights—that Parliament ascribed certain characteristics to the Access to Information Act that led the Supreme Court of Canada to determine that the act is a quasi-constitutional statute.

Therefore, while the constitutional right of the House and its committees over their parliamentary proceedings is unquestionable, the NDP believes that a more transparent and functional approach could be taken by parliamentary committees in their dealings with third party notices, as they are called, under the Access to Information Act without compromising parliamentary privilege.

We also indicated in our supplementary opinion that the House should pursue, as a matter of some priority, amendments to the Access to Information Act to more clearly set out what documents are encompassed by privilege and what definition of parliamentary privilege or elements of parliamentary privilege should be added to statute law, ideally to the Parliament of Canada Act.

With respect to amendments to the Access to Information Act, New Democrats believe that due to the differing interpretations of existing law and constitutional norms presented by witnesses for the study—in particular, how they interact—the House should consider amending the Access to Information Act to include a new discretionary exemption for parliamentary privilege. This would be consistent with the recommendations of the 1987 report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Solicitor General entitled “Open and Shut: Enhancing the Right to Know and the Right to Privacy” as

well as the 2002 task force report entitled “Access to Information: Making it Work for Canadians”.

Other Westminster systems, it is important to note, have similar exemptions in place where such an amendment would prevent costly legal battles and provide a statutory basis for the House of Commons to act. Such an exemption would also prevent government institutions from using parliamentary privilege in a way that would exclude their own documents. Without a statutory provision and with an overly broad interpretation of privilege, government departments may try to exempt or exclude information that relates to Parliament. This could include, as small examples, the question period cards, the ministers' briefing notes for officials who have been asked to appear before committees, or even observations about what has happened in Parliament.

• (1530)

The history of the Access to Information Act in Canada shows that even minor exceptions or exclusions will be interpreted in an overly broad way without clear language in the statute and without political leadership that favours disclosure over secrecy. It would be important that such an exemption be discretionary, meaning that access could be granted by the House. Most important, as I have already said, is that the exercise of discretion should be weighted in favour of disclosure to the public.

In conclusion, let me comment that the study was indeed illuminating and educational for all members of the committee. As our chair noted on several occasions, every point brought up by witnesses seemed to raise more questions. We certainly agree.

As we stated in our supplementary opinion last spring, we considered the study to be only the beginning of a discussion on the subject of access to information and the Parliament of Canada. There must be ways for Parliament to modernize and provide greater transparency to the public.

The opposition also has a responsibility to suggest remedies, and people know that they can count on us to propose practical solutions. That is why, just a few weeks ago, the NDP announced a practical plan in regard to the Access to Information Act with respect to protecting Canadians' right to know. We understand that comprehensive reforms are needed, so we are asking the government to agree to table immediately, or at least as soon as possible, changes to the Access to Information Act to accomplish three things.

First, Parliament must give the commissioner order-making powers to make sure that the commissioner has real teeth to enforce the act.

Second, the Access to Information Act should allow the Information Commissioner to look at cabinet documents so that this cannot be used to shield documents that should be released. The current blanket exclusion of cabinet confidences is being abused. Evidence suggests that any document the government does not want released is all too often classified as a cabinet confidence, whether it is truly so or not.

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Under current legislation, the Information Commissioner does not have the power to review these documents to determine whether that classification is justified. Making cabinet confidences exempt rather than excluded from the act would allow the commissioner to verify that the requested documents truly are cabinet confidences and to order their release if they are not.

Third, Parliament should extend the Access to Information Act to cover the administration of the House of Commons and the Senate. This was recommended in many past reviews of the act and is one of the core recommendations we received from the Information Commissioner. Combined with our commitment to make a more detailed system of MP reporting of expenses available by default, this would open up Parliament and give Canadians the transparency they deserve, and most importantly, the transparency they want.

I encourage all members to take a look at the NDP's dissenting report, tabled today, on the subject.

While steps have been taken in terms of the greater release of information on spending by the House of Commons and also in terms of Internet access to committee proceedings, more must be done. I am going to give one example that I will freely admit is almost a bee in my bonnet. For example, the digitization of government answers to order paper questions has not yet resulted in online searchability of these answers. This could be a useful next step for transparency.

To conclude, parliamentary privilege is important in protecting freedom of speech for members of Parliament and in protecting them from intimidation, but when it is used to hide information the public would expect to be available, its invocation becomes a detriment to the standing of Parliament.

• (1535)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to put a few words on the record with respect to the report, but I would also make reference to a report brought forward today.

Canadians have a growing expectation of their parliamentarians. They want to see more accountability. They want to see more transparency. The report we are making reference to today allows more clarity on the issue.

We have had the first report, since being prorogued, of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. It was about the Board of Internal Economy. There is a Liberal Party supplement expressing our concerns. One of the critical concerns was about in-camera meetings. This is something we have seen in a wide variety of committees, and it has a profound impact on the Auditor General, or anyone else, in terms of access to what actually transpires at a particular meeting. Arguing for transparency and accountability, that is the reason, almost without exception, the Board of Internal Economy should not have in-camera meetings.

Another aspect we talked about was an independent commissioner who would deal with issues such as appeals and pay and benefits.

With regard to the report we are dealing with today, I understand that it deals strictly with access to information requests. It came up as a result of a request when the House was in recess. We found that

there was a need for PROC to deal with the important issue of how and what we can see released.

There were four points, which the government representative referred to. I, too, would like to make some reference to them.

The first deals with public and accessible documents. Whenever there is a standing committee, of whatever nature, a considerable amount of information is made available and it is for the public record. One would anticipate that if there were a request for that information, it would be made available.

The second point is the issue of in-camera documents. Because there are so many restrictions in terms of receiving information discussed at in-camera meetings, we have to do what we can to minimize the number of in-camera meetings that take place.

What we have found is that the current government, more than any other prior government, has a tendency to go in camera as often as it possibly can. When that occurs, as we will see through the recommendations in this report, it is almost impossible to get any form of information, even through access to information requests.

• (1540)

The third point is that when we have meetings that are not in camera, and a presentation is made, sometimes those presentations have an addendum that is circulated to members of Parliament. Because of the secretive nature of the attachment, there may be a valid argument that in certain situations, the sensitivity of that particular file warrants the entire document not being released, even though it was for public standing committee meeting.

Fourth, there are occasions when we see documents prepared by government institutions for parliamentary proceedings, but they are never presented or submitted. I have experienced that first-hand, when for any number of reasons, the presentation was never made, and the information being made available for the committee members was quite substantial. I have had the opportunity to use some of that information. It was meant to be public, and we believe that there is merit in it being released.

We recognize the importance of parliamentary privilege. At the end of the day, we believe that the report is positive. There is not a dissenting report from the Liberal Party, although we share some of the concerns expressed by the New Democratic Party.

I would conclude my remarks by emphasizing how critically important it is that we recognize that we need to see more transparency and more accountability in government. One of the ways we can ensure that is to minimize the number of in camera meetings that take place. In camera meetings are necessary in certain situations, but the government has been far too dependent on them. We call upon the government to recognize that the more we can avoid in camera meetings, the better off we will be as an institution, and ultimately, Canadians will win.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to add my few words on behalf of the Liberal Party.

• (1545)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure to join the discussion on the recently tabled report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

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I want to start by thanking all of the recognized political parties for doing something unprecedented, at least it appears unprecedented from my research. In the closing days of our session at the end of June, in negotiating our slightly early adjournment, the member for Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre took the role of negotiating on behalf of the Conservatives, the House leader for the official opposition and so on and they agreed with a proposal I made to them.

It is a real concern for members of recognized parties in the House, such as the Bloc Québécois and the Green Party, who do not have 12 members and therefore are not included as members of the Board of Internal Economy. It is also an interest for members who are truly independent members and not associated with political parties, such as the member for Thunder Bay—Superior North, the member for Edmonton—St. Albert and the member for Ahuntsic. In the case of all of us as a group, we have no more idea of what goes on in the Board of Internal Economy than a member of the media or anybody in the general public.

Those meetings that are in camera can be reported back to the caucuses of the three larger parties, Conservatives, the New Democrats and Liberals, but for those of us who sit either in smaller parties or as independents, we do not have any knowledge of what transpires and how decisions are made.

However, all of us collectively achieved something quite remarkable for which I want to thank the members of the larger recognized parties. We were allowed to participate in the discussions that took place and the specific hearings of the Board of Internal Economy within the committee on House and procedural affairs, and we have tabled our own report. This is again an unprecedented achievement because the Bloc Québécois, the Green Party, the member for Ahuntsic, the member for Edmonton—St. Albert and the member for Thunder Bay—Superior North do not always see eye to eye on everything, but we did agree on some key points. The member for Edmonton—St. Albert agreed on all but one point with us.

Our report appears as an addendum and in essence it is this.

We do not believe the status quo is acceptable. We do not think the Canadian public is any longer prepared to accept that there are areas that take place in the dark and nobody in the public ever has access to know what decisions are being made. The Canadian public has a right to expect full accountability, transparency and good governance from those of us in this place.

Personally, I have been posting all my expenses online from the day I had the honour of being elected as the member of Parliament for Saanich—Gulf Islands. That is what should be done. I know there are arguments from some in the House that we need to have it become uniform. This report presented by the smaller parties and independent members puts forward a solution on which I would like to touch.

We think we need to “democratize”, because it was basically the evidence from the former Speaker of the House, the Hon. John Fraser and our current Clerk, Audrey O'Brien, that we should have a democratizing of the process. We differ on how that might work out.

Rob Walsh, the former law clerk and parliamentary counsel to this place, offered a suggestion that one way to democratize the Board of Internal Economy would be to have a member of the public sit as a member of that committee. Our position as a group of independent members of Parliament, Bloc Québécois members and Green Party is why not start with having a representative of those of us in this situation.

We are elected members of Parliament who now have no access whatsoever to the Board of Internal Economy. In fact, once the Board of Internal Economy makes a decision in camera, we only find out what the decision is, but we have no access to the thought process, competing policy solutions that were considered and why the Board of Internal Economy made one decision over another.

We also think it would be very wise to continue the work with the Auditor General to find ways to publish more information. The obvious way to provide all the information with full transparency is to go to the House administration.

● (1550)

The House administration, in order to reimburse members, already has to receive original receipts of everything. Therefore, it is not complicated to put together the package of all information on how money is spent by members. In order to reimburse us, the House administration has that information and would just be required to put it online.

The one place our group felt that it would be important to suppress some of that information was in relation to Jennifer Stoddart, the Privacy Commissioner's concern. We should probably ensure that if we have had meetings with individuals and constituents, that their personal information of having met with us not be published. Obviously, lobbying is already covered under the Lobbying Act. This would be just to protect privacy concerns of people who may have been meeting with their members of Parliament and would not want to be caught up in us reporting on our expenses, which we must properly do from here. It is something where we are beginning to see a gathering and growing consensus.

The other piece was the Green Party submission to this report. It was the only area where my hon. colleague, who really is honourable, the member for Edmonton—St. Albert, did not want to agree with this, and I accept that. I am very pleased that the Bloc Québécois, the member for Thunder Bay—Superior North and the member for Ahuntsic did agree with me.

It is that there is a lot more that goes on in the Board of Internal Economy than just approving our expenses and looking at issues of financing. The governance of this place as an institution takes place at the Board of Internal Economy. It deals with questions, such as an initiative of the former Speaker of the House, John Fraser, which was called the “Greening of the Hill”. Under his tenure, they got rid of the use of herbicides on the lawns, they put forward a rule that one was not allowed to idle their car on Parliament Hill and the House only use 100% post-consumer paper products. These rules are slipping away and I do not know quite why. Certainly cars idle on the Hill all the time not all the paper is any longer 100% post consumer. We should have ways, as members of this place, to make our views known and to insist on higher levels of ecological performance in this place.

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I am also concerned about the social responsibility. What kind of employers are we here? I think most members are surprised to learn that so much of our staff here are not only low waged, but their employment is very tenuous. For example, the serving staff in cafeterias and the dining room and the drivers. When we are not here, they are laid off. They have no job security, but we expect them to come back. We expect them to be here when we resume. Much like seasonal workers across Canada, they are also disadvantaged by changes to the Employment Insurance Act. They have a hard time going on EI. They are laid off at Christmas, for Heaven's sake. I feel badly about this, but I cannot get access to that decision making unless I have some access to argue the point before the Board of Internal Economy. It makes the decisions.

We believe that we should continue with the Board of Internal Economy, but we should improve it. We should have an eye to possibly going in the direction of the U.K. parliament and having an independent body. However, at this point, let us see what we can improve through greater transparency, greater accountability and access for all members of this place to know how and why we are governed collectively the way we are. To do that, we need to open up the Board of Internal Economy, not just to greater transparency around our expenses, but to have an opportunity for every member of Parliament to have some access to know what is going on in the Board of Internal Economy, to make presentations to it and participate as fully as is possible within the constraints of efficient management of the House of Commons.

Again, I am indebted to the member for Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre and I want to thank all recognized parties, the Conservatives, the Liberals and the New Democrats, and particularly the committee chair of the House committee on procedure and House affairs for accommodating this innovative process that allowed members in my position to participate actively in the hearings on this matter on the committee and in the drafting of the report.

•(1555)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Pursuant to an order made Thursday, November 28, the motion is deemed adopted on division.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

PETITIONS**SAMBRO ISLAND LIGHTHOUSE**

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to present a petition today with hundreds of signatures, from my riding and Canadians across the country, to create a strategy for the preservation of the Sambro Island lighthouse.

The petitioners ask the government to commit to the preservation of the site, which is the oldest operating lighthouse in the Americas. They request that responsibility for the lighthouse be placed with the correct federal department, if the Department of Fisheries and Oceans can no longer maintain it, and that an annual budget for the maintenance of the lighthouse and surrounding structures be established.

I look forward to the minister's response on this.

NAVIGABLE WATERS PROTECTION ACT

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I also have a petition from people who are concerned about the Navigable Waters Protection Act. They are asking that the Government of Canada to assume its responsibility to protect the public's right to navigation and to guarantee continued right of navigation on all of Canada's lakes and rivers, not just the ones that are specifically listed in the new act.

I look forward to the minister's response to this as well.

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have three petitions to present.

The first petition is an act to amend the Navigable Waters Protection Act. The petitioners remind the government that Cowichan River on Vancouver Island in recent years has experienced dangerously low water levels. This situation poses a significant health risk to salmon stocks.

Therefore, the petitioners call upon the House of Commons to support Motion No. 495 to reinsert the Cowichan River into the Navigable Waters Protection Act.

GENETICALLY MODIFIED FOODS

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition calls on the House of Commons to support Bill C-257, An Act to amend the Food and Drugs Act (mandatory labelling for genetically modified foods).

GASOLINE PRICES

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the third petition calls on the government to do something about the overcharging on gasoline in Canada.

The petitioners call for the implementation of meaningful protection for consumers of gasoline in Canada and to augment the existing inspection regime and that the government create an oil and gas ombudsman with power to monitor the oil and gas industry to ensure consumers are protected.

[*Translation*]

PRIVACY

Ms. Charmaine Borg (Terrebonne—Blainville, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present a petition signed by many of my constituents. The petitioners are calling on all members of the House of Commons to support Bill C-475.

They are very worried about the fact that the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act has not been updated since 2000.

Given that technology has changed dramatically since then, the legislation no longer adequately protects Canadians against the risks that are present in the digital age.

[*English*]

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I bring forward a petition that was provided to me and signed by a number of constituents in Winnipeg North.

Routine Proceedings

The petitioners are quite upset with the fact that the government has chosen to increase the size of the House of Commons, realizing that both the New Democrats and the Conservatives want to see more politicians in Canada. They are upset with that and that is the reason why they signed the petition.

[Translation]

FALUN DAFA AND FALUN GONG

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present two petitions this afternoon.

The first petition has to do with human rights, particularly in China.

[English]

The petitioners are from Ajax and Toronto. They call for the Government of Canada to do everything it can to protect the rights of people who practise Falun Dafa and Falun Gong, who find themselves imprisoned in the People's Republic of China, and to push for greater protections for them, particularly as they attempt to flee to Canada as refugees.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is on the subject of climate change and is signed by residents of my riding, particularly from Salt Spring Island, but also from Vancouver, Guelph as well Toronto.

The petitioners call on the House to work toward putting in place the limits required by science for much more rapid reduction of greenhouse gases, particularly to the levels that were once passed by the House, under former Bill C-311, to reduce greenhouse gases by 25% below 1990 levels by 2020 and 80% below 1990 levels by 2050. This the least we should be doing.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 35 and 45.

[Text]

Question No. 35—**Mr. Glenn Thibeault:**

With regard to government's funding for tourism, and the return on investment which this funding produces, what is the estimated economic multiplier for spending by (a) the Canadian Tourism Commission; and (b) other departments on tourism-related projects, in terms of (i) government revenues, (ii) Gross Domestic Product?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a)(i) and (a)(ii), the Canadian Tourism Commission, or CTC, provides annual estimates of its economic indicators, which can be found in its annual report. The Canadian Tourism Commission does not provide an estimate of the impact of its programming on GDP.

With regard to (b)(i), the Government of Canada supports a strong tourism industry through targeted programs and services. In 2009-2010, the federal government contributed over \$827 million to various programs, projects, and activities that had a direct impact on tourism. In 2010-2011, the contribution reached over \$939 million.

Overall, tourism in Canada generated \$21.4 billion for governments in 2011, up 6.6% from 2010. Tourism exports generated by international travelers' spending in Canada contributed \$4.7 billion to government revenues in 2011, representing 21.8% of total government revenues attributable to tourism. The source for this information is the document entitled Government Revenues Attributable to Tourism, or GRAT, from Statistics Canada.

With regard to (b)(ii), the tourism sector plays a vital role in our economy and is an important economic driver and community builder in all regions of Canada. In 2012, tourism activities directly accounted for \$32.4 billion of Canada's GDP, an increase of 3.8% over 2011 in current dollars. Tourism represents about 2% of Canada's GDP.

Question No. 45—**Mr. Ted Hsu:**

With regard to the recent sale of crown land owned by Correctional Service of Canada (CSC), in the amount of 1,554.48 square meters, located on Frontenac Institute in Kingston, Ontario: (a) who is the purchaser; (b) what is the purchase price; (c) what is the closing date of the transaction; (d) what were all the measures taken to respect the Commissioner's Directive for Real Property for CSC, in particular the statement, under Principles, that "acquisition and disposal of real property assets will be done in a fair and open manner, which shall include public consultation"; (e) what was the first date of any communications regarding the sale of this land between the government and the purchaser; (f) what was the first date of any communications regarding the sale of this land between the government and parties who expressed interest but ultimately did not purchase the land; (g) who signed the agreement; (h) under what authority; (i) on what date; and (j) what was the first date of any communications regarding the sale of this land between the government and parties other than those in (e) and (f)?

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as of October 17, 2013, the sale of the Crown land owned by CSC located on Frontenac Institution in Kingston, Ontario, has yet to be finalized. Therefore, CSC is unable to respond to the question, pending the completion of the sale.

* * *

•(1600)

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if Questions Nos. 1 to 4, 7, 8, 13, 14, 18, 27, 28, 32 to 34 and 38 to 41 could be made orders for return, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): It that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Routine Proceedings

[Text]

Question No. 1—Hon. Irwin Cotler:

With regard to aboriginal justice, broken down by year from 2006 to the present: (a) how much money was dedicated to the Aboriginal Justice Strategy (AJS); (b) how much money was devoted to other aboriginal justice programs; (c) with respect to (a) and (b), by program, how much money was spent; (d) by whom were monies in (a) and (b) spent, on what dates, and for what purpose; (e) broken down by province and territory, on what dates were provinces and territories consulted with respect to funding of the AJS for the upcoming year; (f) broken down by province and territory, on what dates were the provinces and territories consulted with respect to other aboriginal justice programs; (g) broken down by province and territory, how much did each request of the government with respect to the AJS; (h) broken down by province and territory, with which First Nations did the government consult with respect to the AJS; (i) with which First Nations groups and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) did the government consult with respect to the AJS; (j) with which other stakeholders did the government consult with respect to the AJS; (k) which stakeholders were informed of budget decisions relative to the AJS, by what means and on what dates; (l) broken down by province and territory, how much did each request of the government with respect to other aboriginal justice programs; (m) broken down by province and territory, with which First Nations did the government consult with respect to other aboriginal justice programs; (n) with which First Nations groups and NGOs did the government consult with respect to other aboriginal justice programs; (o) with which other stakeholders did the government consult with respect to other aboriginal justice programs; (p) how does the government determine stakeholders regarding aboriginal justice concerns; (q) by whom, with what criteria, and when was the AJS budget determined; (r) in what ways, by whom, and when is AJS evaluated; (s) in which Federal-Provincial-Territorial Ministers' meetings was the AJS raised; (t) what commitments were made by the government; (u) were those commitments met; (v) which stakeholders were informed of budget decisions relative to other aboriginal justice programs, by what means and on what dates; (w) by whom, with what criteria, and when were these budgets determined; (x) in what ways, by whom, and when are these programs evaluated; (y) in which Federal-Provincial-Territorial Ministers' meetings were these programs raised; (z) what commitments were made by the government; (aa) were those commitments met; (bb) in what ways do these programs work to implement the Gladue principles; (cc) in what other ways are the Gladue principles being implemented; (dd) by what means, how often, with which criteria, and by whom does the government evaluate its implementation of the Gladue principles; (ee) what programs and strategies are in place to ensure both respect for and compliance with the Gladue principles; (ff) how many Gladue courts operate in Canada; (gg) in what ways is the government engaged with Gladue courts; (hh) in what ways does the government support Gladue courts; (ii) in what ways does the government ensure training for judges on the Gladue principles; (ij) in what ways does the government ensure training for prosecutors on the Gladue principles; (kk) in what ways does the government ensure the consideration of Gladue principles in its filings and submissions before the courts; (ll) in what ways is the government addressing the over-representation of aboriginals in prisons; (mm) what are the principles of the government's aboriginal justice approach; (nn) how does the government evaluate whether its approach to aboriginal justice is working; (oo) by what specific standards, by whom and how often do such evaluations occur; (pp) in what ways does the government undertake predictions or forecasts with respect to the incarceration of aboriginal offenders; (qq) how are these forecasts taken into account in criminal justice policy development; (rr) in what ways are proposed justice laws evaluated for their impact on aboriginal persons; (ss) in what ways is the government incorporating aboriginal justice into its overall justice strategy; (tt) what policies exist to ensure aboriginal justice concerns are taken into account at every stage of policy and legislative development; (uu) who is responsible for keeping statistics on aboriginal justice; (vv) with respect to (uu), what statistics are available and from which departments; and (ww) with respect to (vv) what are the figures for each of the last three years?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2—Hon. Irwin Cotler:

With regard to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration's statement in the House of Commons on March 14, 2012, that "we have issued an operational bulletin to our visa officers and CBSA (Canada Border Service Agency) agents indicating that the African National Congress (ANC) is an organization that has undergone substantial change and, therefore, membership in it should no longer be considered grounds for inadmissibility": (a) when was this directive issued, (i) was this directive issued in written form, (ii) if so, is it publically available and where can it be

accessed, (iii) on what date was it posted to the website of Citizenship and Immigration Canada, (iv) why, as of June 4, 2013, is it unavailable on the website of Citizenship and Immigration Canada, (v) what are the details of the directive, (vi) how was the directive communicated to CBSA agents, (vii) how was the directive communicated to Citizenship and Immigration Canada personnel in Canada, (viii) how was the directive communicated to Embassy and Consulate personnel abroad, (ix) with respect to (vii) and (viii), on what dates did said communication occur, (x) on what date did the directive become effective; (b) does the exemption to inadmissibility created by this directive apply only to ANC members or does it apply to members of any organization that has undergone a fundamental change, (i) if the former, does it apply to both current and former ANC members regardless of the time period during which they were associated with the organization, (ii) if the latter, are there specific guidelines regarding the determination of whether an organization has undergone a fundamental change, (iii) if so, are these guidelines publically available and where can they be accessed, (iv) if not, how is this determination made, (v) what organizations are currently considered to have undergone fundamental change; (c) under what sections of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA) have ANC members been found inadmissible, (i) broken down by year and section, how many ANC members have been found inadmissible, (ii) how long did the determination of inadmissibility take in each case; (d) does this directive necessarily exempt the ANC from inadmissibility pursuant to section 34 of the IRPA; (e) does this directive necessarily exempt the ANC from inadmissibility pursuant to section 37 of the IRPA; (f) does the new directive apply to any organization that has undergone a fundamental change; (g) what provisions of IRPA are specifically targeted by this new directive to ensure that inadmissibility determinations do not solely rest on ANC membership; (h) are specific determinations regarding the admissibility to Canada of current and former ANC members based on individual answers provided to questions on visa application forms; (i) upon a finding that a current or former ANC member is not admissible to Canada, can this determination be appealed and, if so, on what grounds; (j) is it necessary that an applicant have engaged in criminal activity related to his current or former membership in the ANC in order to be denied admissibility based on his membership in this organization, (i) if so, is it necessary that the applicant have a criminal record, (ii) is it necessary that the conduct at issue be currently criminalized in Canada in order to result in inadmissibility pursuant to section 37 of the IRPA; (k) were there any exemptions to the inadmissibility of a current or former ANC member prior to the adoption of this new operational directive; (l) have the new directive and any resulting operational guidelines been applied since their adoption to the cases of any current or former ANC members; (m) to whom can an applicant present evidence that a relevant organization has undergone a fundamental change; (n) what standard of evidence is required for showing that an organization has undergone a fundamental change, (i) how are such decisions made, (ii) by whom and applying what criteria; (o) is a finding of inadmissibility in this regard, or a finding as to the applicability of the "fundamental change" exemption, at the complete discretion of the particular border guard who reviews a particular application, (i) is a finding of inadmissibility in this regard reviewable, (ii) if reviewable, to whom is an application for review made and are the relevant procedural guidelines for review specified, (ii) if there are specified guidelines for review, where can they be accessed; (p) has the Minister proposed any further measures to address the problem of the inadmissibility to Canada of current and former ANC members, (ii) if the Minister has directed that new measures be applied in this regard, to whom has the directive been made and where can they be accessed, (iii) if the Minister has not directed that new measures be applied in this regard, what steps are being taken to ensure that current and former members of the ANC are not automatically denied admissibility to Canada on the basis of their association with that organization; (q) on what occasions and through what channels has the government discussed the ANC visa issue with the Government of South Africa; (r) was the Government of South Africa advised of the operational bulletin and if so, on what date; (s) how is the operational bulletin being evaluated for its effectiveness and what steps are in place to ensure it is working; and (t) prior to their recent South Africa trip, were the Governor General, Foreign Affairs Minister, and Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister informed of the operational bulletin and, if so, on what dates and by whom?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 3—Hon. Irwin Cotler:**

With regard to the State Immunity Act (SIA): (a) what is the process by which the Governor in Council sets out the names of foreign states that are believed to support or to have supported terrorism on the list established pursuant to the SIA; (b) what is the Minister of Foreign Affairs' role in this process; (c) what is the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness' role in this process; (d) do the Ministers engage in regular consultations for the purpose of reviewing and updating the list, (i) how frequently do the Ministers engage in such consultations, (ii) how do the Ministers determine when to consult in this regard, (iii) how do the Ministers determine what states to consider when engaging in such consultations, (iv) on whose initiative are such consultations undertaken, (v) what guidelines control the consultation process, (vi) are consultations conducted privately, (vii) are the minutes of these consultations recorded and, if so, where can they be accessed, (viii) what information is available regarding the substance of these consultations; (e) what foreign states are currently being considered for listing pursuant to the SIA, (i) are the Ministers currently involved in any consultations in this regard, (ii) at what stage do these consultations currently stand, (iii) are there any plans for upcoming consultations in this regard; (f) what steps are being taken to determine whether reasonable grounds exist to believe that any other states not currently listed have been or are engaged in the support of terrorism; (g) what has been the impact thus far of listing states, (i) broken down by state, how many lawsuits of which the government is aware were initiated against these states prior to the listing, (ii) broken down by state, how many lawsuits of which the government is aware are currently pending against listed states, (iii) how much has the government thus far spent in cases in (ii), (iv) who is responsible for defending cases in (ii), (v) what budget exists for defending cases in (ii); (h) on what evidence does the Minister of Foreign Affairs rely in making the determination that reasonable grounds exist to believe that a state is or has been engaged in the support of terrorism, (i) does a determination by the Ministers that a foreign state is or has been engaged in the support of terrorism automatically result in a recommendation by the Minister of Foreign Affairs to list that state pursuant to the SIA, (ii) is it necessary that both Ministers agree in the determination that reasonable grounds exist in order for the Minister of Foreign Affairs to recommend the listing of the state pursuant to the SIA, (iii) what evidentiary rules control the type of evidence that may be considered in making this determination, (iv) can and does the Minister rely on classified information in making this determination, (v) may individuals and groups make submissions in this regard, (vi) how may such submissions be made, (vii) what publically available sources are consulted in the consultation process, (viii) which individuals are involved in the consultation process; (i) does the listing of a state result in that state being subject to the jurisdiction of a Canadian court in an action brought pursuant to the Justice for Victims of Terrorism Act (JVTA) in all instances; (j) in what instances may a listed state enjoy immunity from the jurisdiction of a Canadian court in an action brought pursuant to the JVTA; (k) what types of immunity are covered by the SIA, (i) what types of immunity are not covered by the SIA, (ii) can a state that is listed still claim any type of immunity from the jurisdiction of a Canadian court, (iii) what claims in (ii) will the government defend on behalf of a state, (iv) how, by whom, and applying what standards is the determination in (iii) made; (l) with regard to the listed state of Iran, (i) is it the policy of the government that all Iranian-owned property located in Canada is immune from attachment, (ii) what specific Iranian-owned properties located in Canada are immune from attachment, (iii) on what basis are such properties immune from attachment, (iv) by whom, and applying what standard is the determination in (iii) made; (m) with regard to listed and non-listed states, on what basis does the government support diplomatic immunity for states in civil actions, and how is the determination on (l) made, by whom, and with reference to what authorities; (n) with regard to listed states, on what basis do these states benefit from diplomatic immunity, (i) who makes the determination on the part of the government to invoke such immunity, (ii) in what instances, if any, have states requested that such immunity be invoked, (iii) does the government's obligation to protect diplomatic or consular properties include the obligation to defend a listed state in court, (iv) is it the government's policy that it is obligated to defend a listed state in court, (v) if so, to what extent and how is this determination made, (vi) in what cases has the government made this argument, (vii) in what cases is the government making this argument, (viii) how much has the government spent so far on cases in (vii); (o) with respect to the listing of Iran, was the decision in part based on evidence that the former Iranian embassy in Ottawa has been used to support terrorism, (i) if so, how was the government aware that the embassy was being used for such purposes and on what dates, (ii) does the use of the property that is located in Canada of a foreign state in support of terrorism exempt that property from the immunity provided by the SIA, (iii) does the use of the property that is located in Canada of a foreign state in support of terrorism exempt that property from all immunity, (iv) what type of immunity can still be claimed by a listed foreign state to protect property that is located in Canada that has been or is being used in support of terrorism, (v) does diplomatic immunity protect embassy property even where the

relevant embassy was used or is being used in violation of international law or in support of terrorism; (p) with respect to the listed state of Iran, how much money has been spent defending it in court, (i) what are the anticipated costs of defending the Islamic Republic of Iran in court, (ii) is there a government policy or directive indicating the acceptable costs to be expended in defending the Islamic Republic of Iran in court, (iii) from where does the government obtain the funds necessary to defend the Islamic Republic of Iran in court, (iv) what is the maximum amount of money that the government will spend in defense of the Islamic Republic of Iran in court; (q) with respect to the listed state of Iran, can the property located in Ottawa at which the former embassy of Iran was located be attached in a civil action by victims of Iranian-sanctioned terrorism to enforce a judgment against the Islamic Republic of Iran, (i) what are the government's obligations toward the Islamic Republic of Iran in this regard, (ii) does the government know this property to be currently owned by the Islamic Republic of Iran, (iii) does the government know this property to have at any time been owned by the Islamic Republic of Iran, (iv) is it necessary that the property be currently owned by the Islamic Republic of Iran for it to receive immunity from the jurisdiction of a Canadian court; (r) can the property located in Ottawa at which the former residence of the Ambassador of Iran to Canada is located be attached in a civil action by victims of Iranian-sanctioned terrorism to enforce a judgment against the Islamic Republic of Iran, (i) what are the government's obligations towards the Islamic Republic of Iran in this regard, (ii) does the government know this property to be currently owned by the Islamic Republic of Iran, (iii) does the government know this property to have at any time been owned by the Islamic Republic of Iran, (iv) is it necessary that the property be currently owned by the Islamic Republic of Iran for it to receive immunity from the jurisdiction of a Canadian court; (s) can the property located in Toronto at which the former Iranian cultural center is located be attached in an action by victims of Iranian-sanctioned terrorism to enforce a judgment against the Islamic Republic of Iran, (i) what are the government's obligations towards the Islamic Republic of Iran in this regard, (ii) does the government know this property to be currently owned by the Islamic Republic of Iran, (iii) does the government know this property to have at any time been owned by the Islamic Republic of Iran, (iv) is it necessary that the property be currently owned by the Islamic Republic of Iran for it to receive immunity from the jurisdiction of a Canadian court; (t) by whom, how often, and by what criteria will the SIA's effectiveness be evaluated and who is responsible for this review; (u) by what means were listed states informed of their listing, (i) on what dates, (ii) by whom, (iii) is there a policy with regard to informing states of their having been listed, (iv) if so, what is it; (v) what education, outreach, and awareness efforts have been made to inform Canadians of the listing of states and their corresponding obligations, (i) what education, outreach, and awareness efforts have been made to inform Canadian companies of the listing of states and their corresponding obligations, (ii) what education, outreach, and awareness efforts will be made to inform Canadians of the listing of states and their corresponding obligations, (iii) what education, outreach, and awareness efforts will be made to inform Canadian companies of the listing of states and their corresponding obligations; and (w) what education, outreach, and awareness efforts were made with respect to changes to state immunity occasioned by the coming into force of the JVTA, (i) in particular, how were judges informed of the changes, (ii) how were states informed of the possibility of a listing pursuant to the JVTA, (iii) were efforts made to reach out to potential claimants affected by changes to the SIA, (iv) if so, what were these efforts, how were they undertaken, by whom, and on what dates?

(Return tabled)

Routine Proceedings

Question No. 4—Hon. Irwin Cotler:

With regard to international treaties and conventions dealing in whole or in part with human rights and with Canada's international obligations in this regard: (a) does the government have any formal or informal procedures for regular review of those international human rights treaties that Canada has not yet signed, ratified, or otherwise accepted; (b) does the government have any formal or informal guidelines according to which it determines whether the specific obligations contained in a treaty or other international undertaking conflicts with the Constitution Act, 1867, and if so where can these guidelines be accessed; (c) do the guidelines referred to in (b) specify the standard according to which the government determines if any obligation contained in a treaty or other international undertaking violates any section of the Constitution Act, 1867; (d) has the government engaged in any review of its obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD); (e) does the government have any formal or informal guidelines according to which it determines whether the specific obligations contained in a treaty or other international undertaking require implementing legislation in order for Canada to be able to ratify or otherwise accept it, and if so where can these guidelines be accessed; (f) does the government have a position as to whether international agreements that establish a complaints mechanism or communications procedure for enforcement of the rights and obligations contained therein are necessarily unconstitutional; (g) does the government have a policy as to whether Canada will accept such agreements referred to in (f); (h) does the government undergo review of proposed international human rights agreements that would establish such a mechanism or procedure referred to in (f) on a case by case basis, (i) who is involved in this review, (ii) are the provinces and other interested stakeholders consulted in this regard; (j) has the government engaged in any discussions or consultations regarding Canada's failure to make the relevant declaration under Article 14 of CERD, which would indicate Canada's acceptance of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination's competence to receive individual complaints, (i) has the government or any minister consulted with any individuals or organizations who have expressed any positions with regard to Canada's failure to make the declaration referred to in subsection (i), (ii) does Canada's failure to make the necessary declaration referred to in (a) cause it to be derelict with regard to its treaty obligations, pursuant to either CERD or any other international treaty or tenet of customary international law, (iii) is there any process, formal or otherwise, by which an individual can issue a complaint or communication to any international or intergovernmental organization or international tribunal pertaining to Canada's obligations under CERD, (iv) has the government received any complaints or communications from any individuals, organizations, or State Parties to CERD regarding its obligations under the CERD, (v) has the government taken any action in response to such complaints referred to in (iv), (vi) does the government have a position as to whether Article 14 of CERD violates any section of the Constitution Act, 1867 and, if so, what specific sections does it violate, (vii) has the government engaged in any consultations, either with the provinces or with any other relevant stakeholders, regarding Canada's failure to sign and accept Article 14 of CERD; (j) has the government engaged in any review of its obligations under the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), (i) has the government engaged in any discussions or consultations regarding Canada's failure to sign the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (Optional Protocol), which establishes a communications procedure for individuals to file a complaint before the ICESCR Committee alleging a violation of the rights or obligations contained in the treaty, (ii) has the government or any minister consulted with any individuals or organizations who have expressed any positions with regard to Canada's failure to sign the Optional Protocol referred to in (i), (iii) does Canada's failure to sign the Optional Protocol referred to in (i) cause it to be derelict with regard to its treaty obligations, pursuant to either ICESCR or any other international treaty or tenet of customary international law, (iv) is there any process, formal or otherwise, by which an individual can issue a complaint or communication to any international or intergovernmental organization or international tribunal pertaining to Canada's obligations under ICESCR, (v) has the government received any complaints or communications from any individuals, organizations, or State Parties to ICESCR regarding its obligations under ICESCR, (vi) has the government taken any action in response to such complaints referred to in (v), (vii) does the government have a position as to whether the Optional Protocol referred to in (i) violates any section of the Constitution Act, 1867 and, if so, what specific sections does it violate, (viii) has the government engaged in any consultations, either with the provinces or with any other relevant stakeholders, regarding Canada's failure to sign and accept the Optional Protocol referred to in (i); (k) has the government engaged in any review of its obligations under the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT), (i) has the government engaged in any discussions or consultations regarding Canada's failure to sign the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Optional Protocol), which establishes a system of unannounced visits

by international and national monitoring bodies to places where persons are being deprived of their liberty, (ii) has the government or any minister consulted with any individuals or organizations who have expressed any positions with regard to Canada's failure to sign the Optional Protocol referred to in (i), (iii) does Canada's failure to sign the Optional Protocol referred to in (i) cause it to be derelict with regard to its treaty obligations, pursuant to either CAT or any other international treaty or tenet of customary international law, (iv) is there any process, formal or otherwise, by which an individual can issue a complaint or communication to any international or intergovernmental organization or international tribunal pertaining to Canada's obligations under the Optional Protocol referred to in (i), (v) has the government received any complaints or communications from any individuals, organizations, or State Parties to CAT regarding its obligations under CAT, (vi) has the government taken any action in response to such complaints referred to in (v), (vii) does the government have a position as to whether the Optional Protocol referred to in (i) violates any section of the Constitution Act, 1867 and, if so, what specific sections does it violate, (viii) has the government engaged in any consultations, either with the provinces or with any other relevant stakeholders, regarding Canada's failure to sign and accept the Optional Protocol referred to in (i), (ix) has the government received any requests either from a State Party to CAT or from any international or national monitoring group or other organization to visit a specific location in order to confirm allegations that Canada is derelict with regard to its obligations under CAT or where an individual is alleged to be deprived by Canada of their liberties, and if so how has the government responded, (l) has the government engaged in any review of its obligations under the Amendment to Article 43(2) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography, (i) has the government engaged in any discussions or consultations regarding Canada's failure to sign the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure (Third Optional Protocol), which establishes a complaints procedure by which individuals can allege a State Party's violation of its obligations set out in the conventions or optional protocols referred to in (i), (ii) has the government or any minister consulted with any individuals or organizations who have expressed any positions with regard to Canada's failure to sign the Third Optional Protocol referred to in (i), (iii) does Canada's failure to sign the Third Optional Protocol referred to in (i) cause it to be derelict with regard to its treaty obligations, pursuant to either ICESCR or any other international treaty or tenet of customary international law, (iv) is there any process, formal or otherwise, by which an individual can issue a complaint or communication to any international or intergovernmental organization or international tribunal pertaining to Canada's obligations under the Optional Protocol referred to in (i), (v) has the government received any complaints or communications from any individuals, organizations, or State Parties to any of the international agreements referred to in (i) regarding its obligations under any of those agreements, (vi) has the government taken any action in response to such complaints referred to in (v), (vii) does the government have a position as to whether the Third Optional Protocol referred to in (i) violates any section of the Constitution Act, 1867 and, if so, what specific sections does it violate, (viii) has the government engaged in any consultations, either with the provinces or with any other relevant stakeholders, regarding Canada's failure to sign and accept the Third Optional Protocol referred to in (i); (m) has the government engaged in any discussions or consultations regarding Canada's failure to sign the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (ICPRMW), (i) does Canada's failure to sign the ICPRMW referred to in (e) cause it to be derelict with regard to its obligations pursuant to any international treaty or tenet of customary international law, (ii) is there any process, formal or otherwise, by which an individual can issue a complaint pertaining to Canada's obligations towards migrant workers and temporary foreign workers under international law, (iii) is it the position of the government that temporary foreign workers in Canada who believe their rights pursuant to either domestic or international law have been violated should be allowed to remain in Canada pending the outcome of judicial proceedings in this regard, (iv) is there any formal policy in place by which temporary foreign workers in Canada can ensure that they are not deported pending the outcome of judicial proceedings relating to an alleged violation of their rights under international law, (v) does Canada have an obligation under international law to ensure that temporary foreign workers have access to Canadian courts to adjudicate violations of their rights under domestic or international law, (vi) is there any legal or constitutional barrier to Canada becoming a State Party to the ICPRMW referred to in (e); and (n) has the government engaged in any review of its obligations under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), (i) has the government engaged in any discussions or consultations regarding Canada's failure to sign the Optional Protocol to the CRPD, (ii) has the government or any minister consulted with any individuals or organizations who have expressed

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any positions with regard to Canada's failure to sign the Third Optional Protocol referred to in (i), (iii) does Canada's failure to sign the Optional Protocol referred to in (i) cause it to be derelict with regard to its treaty obligations, pursuant to either CRPD or any other international treaty or tenet of customary international law, (iv) is there any process, formal or otherwise, by which an individual can issue a complaint or communication to any international or intergovernmental organization or international tribunal pertaining to Canada's obligations under the Optional Protocol referred to in (i), (v) has the government received any complaints or communications from any individuals, organizations, or State Parties to the international agreement referred to in (n) regarding its obligations under any of those agreements, (vi) has the government taken any action in response to such complaints referred to in (v), (vii) does the government have a position as to whether the Optional Protocol referred to in (i) violates any section of the Constitution Act, 1867 and, if so, what specific sections does it violate, (viii) has the government engaged in any consultations—either with the provinces or with any other relevant stakeholders—regarding Canada's failure to sign and accept the Third Optional Protocol referred to in (i)?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 7—Mr. Yvon Godin:

With regard to the Government-wide Chart of Accounts: (a) how does the Receiver General for Canada fulfill his official languages obligations; (b) how does the Treasury Board Secretariat fulfill its official languages obligations; (c) what positive measures have been taken as regards official languages; (d) are official languages integrated into the Chart and if so, how, or if not, why not; (e) how does the Chart allow for data on financial transactions to be identified, collected and reported in such a way as to fulfill the government's official languages obligations; and (f) what are the program codes regarding official languages, and for which institutions are they used?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 8—Mr. Yvon Godin:

With regard to the Roadmap for Canada's Official Languages 2013–2018: (a) has the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat issued a directive or other instruction to all federal institutions participating in the implementation of the Roadmap to ensure that they consult the official language minority communities when establishing objectives, parameters, targets and performance indicators for their programs under the Roadmap; (b) how will Canadian Heritage ensure that the institutions participating in the implementation of the Roadmap effectively consult the official language minority communities in a timely manner to determine the program objectives, parameters, targets and performance indicators that must be identified before presenting an overview memorandum to Treasury Board; (c) among the federal institutions participating in the implementation of the Roadmap, are there any that have already consulted the communities with regard to program objectives, parameters, targets and performance indicators and, if so, which community groups and organizations were consulted; and (d) what deadline was given to the federal institutions for consulting the communities and for presenting their memorandum to Heritage Canada?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 13—Mr. Sean Casey:

With regard to the Department of Veterans Affairs, what are the contents of all news releases, media advisories or any form of communication, national, regional or "proactive local outreach" in scope, issued by the Department between November 6 and November 15, 2012?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 14—Hon. Geoff Regan:

With regard to the Canadian Radio-Television Telecommunications Commission (CRTC): (a) what is the position of the government on the matter of overturning decisions of the CRTC; (b) what criteria or policies are used by the Cabinet to overturn decisions of the CRTC; (c) how many times since 2006 has the Cabinet overturned decisions of the CRTC and what were those decisions; and (d) who are the current members of the CRTC and what are each member's date of appointment or reappointment?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 18—Hon. Thomas Mulcair :

With regard to government spending in the constituency of Outremont, what was the total amount of government funding since fiscal year 2005-2006 up to and including the current fiscal year, broken down by (i) the date the money was received in the riding, (ii) the dollar amount of the expenditure, (iii) the program from which the funding came, (iv) the ministry responsible, (v) the designated recipient?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 27—Mr. Massimo Pacetti:

What is the total amount of government funding, allocated within the constituency of Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel in the fiscal year 2009-2010, listing each department or agency, initiative and amount?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 28—Mr. Massimo Pacetti:

What is the total amount of government funding, allocated within the constituency of Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel in the fiscal year 2010-2011, listing each department or agency, initiative and amount?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 32—Mr. Peter Julian:

With regard to all ministerial visits to British Columbia, from September 1, 2013 to October 16, 2013, that involved discussions or announcements related to energy: (a) what was the total cost of these visits; (b) what were the costs of these visits, broken down by (i) minister, (ii) event, (iii) travel cost per person, (iv) travel cost per event, (v) advertising or promotional cost per event; (c) what is the list of events; and (d) who travelled for these events?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 33—Hon. Jim Karygiannis:

With regard to ministerial business, including that of the Prime Minister, since May 2, 2011: (a) how many invitations to speak at, appear at, or attend a function has each minister or the Prime Minister, or their ministerial or departmental staff, accepted or initiated; (b) how many requests to speak at, appear at, or attend a function has each minister or the Prime Minister, or their ministerial or departmental staff, made; (c) what were the details of each such invitation or request, including the date, location, and nature of the function; (d) what were the costs of transportation, accommodation, meals, and security related to the travel of the minister or Prime Minister to and from each such function; (e) what were the costs of transportation, accommodation, and meals incurred by the minister's or Prime Minister's exempt staff members in relation to each such function; and (f) what are the file numbers of any files generated in respect of each such function?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 34—Mr. Glenn Thibault:

With regard to Industry Canada's "More Choices" campaign, relating to the government's auction of the 700Mhz spectrum, what was the total spending by the government (a) on print advertising to promote this campaign; (b) on television advertising to promote this campaign; (c) on radio advertising to promote this campaign; (d) on online or web advertising to promote this campaign; and (e) to design the www.canada.ca/morechoices website?

(Return tabled)

*Government Orders*Question No. 38—**Ms. Judy Foote:**

With regard to changes in employment insurance (EI), in each province and economic region, broken down by age (18-24, 25-54, 55 and over), and for the time period between January and June, broken down by month and totaled for each year since 2004: (a) how many unemployed Canadians (i) applied for EI, (ii) received EI, (iii) how many applicants were rejected; (b) what was the cost to process these applications; (c) what were the total costs of these benefits; (d) how many in receipt of EI benefits in 2013 have previously received EI (i) one time, (ii) two times, (iii) three times or more; (e) how many claimants with three or more claims totaling more than sixty weeks in the past five years have had to accept a job that paid thirty percent less than their last job; (f) how many claimants worked while on EI; (g) how many total applicants have dependents, and how many of these applicants were rejected; (h) of the three new classes created, how many applicants fall under (i) long tenured workers, (ii) frequent claimants, (iii) occasional claimants; and (i) how many applicants live (i) in rural areas, (ii) in urban areas?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 39—**Mr. Bruce Hyer:**

With regard to the so-called “carbon bubble”, or the inflation of hydrocarbon and oil and gas sector company stock valuation beyond their utilisable assets, what modeling, planning, estimates or mitigation strategies have been carried out since 2008 on this investment bubble or its potential impacts on the Canadian economy by (i) the Department of Finance, (ii) Industry Canada, (iii) Natural Resources Canada, (iv) any other government department or agency?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 40—**Mr. Bruce Hyer:**

With regard to adaptation to climate change and future impacts of climate change on department or agency operations: (a) what planning has been done since October 14, 2008 by (i) the Department of National Defence, (ii) Health Canada, (iii) Transport Canada, (iv) Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, (v) Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, (vi) Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, (vii) Canada Revenue Agency, (viii) Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, (ix) Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, (x) Canadian Security Intelligence Service, (xi) Great Lakes Pilotage Authority, (xii) Industry Canada, (xiii) Foreign Affairs, (xiv) Infrastructure Canada, (xv) International Joint Commission, (xvi) National Capital Commission, (xvii) Parks Canada, (xviii) Public Health Agency of Canada, (xix) Fisheries and Oceans Canada, (xx) Natural Resources Canada, (xxi) Environment Canada, (xxii) Emergency Preparedness Canada; and (b) since October 14, 2008 what climate change economic impact assumptions have been made or budgetary estimates been done for the departments and agencies listed in (a)(i) through (xxii)?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 41—**Mr. Bruce Hyer:**

With regard to government funding distributed in the constituency of Thunder Bay—Superior North from the 2011-2012 fiscal year to the current fiscal year inclusive, listed by date: (a) what is the total amount of this funding, broken down by (i) department, (ii) agency, (iii) program, (iv) any other government body; and (b) how many full time and part-time jobs is this estimated to have created?

(Return tabled)

[English]

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

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

ECONOMIC ACTION PLAN 2013 ACT NO. 2

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-4, A second act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 21, 2013 and other measures, as reported (without amendment) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

Mr. Rob Clarke (Desnethé—Mississippi—Churchill River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to add my comments to this debate.

Today I will focus on ways in which economic action plan 2013 helps strengthen Canada's economy in these uncertain times.

Let me assure the House that our government remains committed to what matters most to Canadians: job creation and economic growth. Indeed, just last week Statistics Canada announced that Canada's economy expanded in the third quarter of 2013. This is the ninth consecutive positive quarter of economic growth and this is just the most recent example that our economy remains on the right track.

What is more, Canada continues to have the best job growth record among all of the G7, with over one million net new jobs created since the depth of the global economic recession.

However, Canada is not immune to the challenges beyond our borders. The global economy remains fragile, especially in the U.S. and Europe, our largest trading partners. That is why our Conservative government is working hard to grow the Canadian economy with positive measures such as tax breaks to help small businesses create more jobs, freezing employment insurance premium increases to allow Canadians to take home more of what they earn, and introducing new tax relief to help our manufacturing sector grow.

Indeed, implementing the job-supporting measures in economic action plan 2013 will help Canada's economy continue to grow. It is these job-supporting measures that I would like to discuss today.

Our Conservative government recognizes the vital role small businesses play in the economy and job creation. That is why we are committed to helping them grow and succeed. We know that we have been growing. We see the results in that Canada is leading the world in job creation with more than one million net new jobs since the recession. However, while the Canadian economy is improving, uncertainty remains.

We heard the concerns of business owners. That is why Bill C-4 would extend and expand the hiring credit for small business. By expanding this credit over 560,000 employers will benefit, helping them hire new workers and grow. This would provide an estimated \$225 million in tax relief in 2013.

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Bill C-4 would also increase the lifetime capital gains exemption to \$800,000 from \$750,000. This would increase the rewards of investing in small businesses and make it easier for owners to transfer their family businesses to the next generation. Today's legislation would also index the exemption to inflation for the first time. This would ensure the real value of the lifetime capital gains exemption is not eroded over time. Overall, this measure would provide an estimated \$5 million in tax relief in 2013-14, and \$15 million in 2014-15.

As Dan Kelly of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business said:

...they've expanded the lifetime capital gains exemption to \$800,000. That's really good news, with a promise to index it each year going forward. That will help a lot of entrepreneurs.

There is still more. Bill C-4 would freeze employment insurance premium rates in 2015 and 2016. This tax relief would help support Canada's continued economic recovery and sustained business-led, long-term growth. This would build on our government's recent announcement to freeze EI premium rates, bringing more stability and predictability to employers and workers. What is more, it would save them \$660 million in 2014 alone.

Diane J. Brisebois, president and CEO of the Retail Council of Canada, agrees. She stated, "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 into Canada, create jobs for Canadians and foster long-term economic growth.

Dan Kelly, president of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, stated:

...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.

●(1605)

Bill C-4 would also extend tax relief to manufacturers, by expanding the accelerated capital cost allowance to include the equipment used in the production of biogas and equipment used to treat gases from waste.

Unlike the opposition, our government understands that tax relief is important to Canadians and families. In fact, as a result of our government's low-tax plan, in 2013 the average Canadian family now pays \$3,400 less in taxes. This includes reducing the GST from 7% to 5%, putting an estimated \$1,000 back into the pockets of the average Canadian family; introducing and enhancing the working income tax benefit; introducing the tax-free savings account, the most important personal savings vehicle since RRSPs; and eliminating consumer tariffs on babies' clothes, sporting goods, exercise equipment and more.

Having said that, our government is under no illusion that our work is finished. The global economy remains fragile with the growth in advanced economies slower than expected, and Canada is not immune. That is why Canada's economic action plan actively

pursues new trade and 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 new jobs. In fact, John Manley, president and CEO of the Canadian Council of Chief Executives agrees, "the [comprehensive economic and trade agreement] will create jobs, spur investment and promote economic growth."

Unlike the members of the opposition, we understand that the pursuit of free trade is beneficial for the economy. Our government 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 currently negotiating with many more. 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 South Korea, reflecting our belief that freer and more open trade is a key stimulus for global economic recovery.

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 not gone unnoticed. Indeed, KPMG's Competitive Alternatives 2012 report concluded that Canada's total business taxes are more than 40% lower than those in the United States, and confirmed that Canada has the lowest tax burden on business in the G7. Along with growing investment and our support for free and open trade, our 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 that:

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 [to coast].

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

Clearly, Canada's competitive tax system plays a crucial role in supporting economic growth. These tax reductions would leave more money for job creation, to hire more workers and to invest in new machinery, equipment and other technology that will further strengthen Canada's economic partnerships.

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With that in mind, it is shocking that just last week the Leader of the Opposition again confirmed that he would increase taxes on Canadian job creators in a time of global economic uncertainty. Clearly, when it comes to the economy the NDP cannot be trusted. With no economic action plan, the Liberals cannot be taken seriously as well. When it comes to the economy, there is a clear choice. It is our Conservative government that will keep Canada's economy strong.

• (1610)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the speech, but it seemed pretty repetitive to me. Indeed, it was more or less the same speech that I have been hearing from all Conservative members any time they are debating a budget bill.

The member talked about job creation and economic growth. One measure in the bill involves phasing out the tax credit for labour-sponsored funds.

I have already mentioned this in the past, but I would like to ask the member the question once more.

Phasing out this tax credit will have a serious impact on job creation. In fact, 160,000 jobs are currently supported by the private venture capital provided by labour-sponsored funds, which makes Quebec a leader in venture capital. Studies have shown that at least 20,000 of those 160,000 jobs are at risk and could disappear as a result of the measure proposed in this budget.

I would like to know how the member can justify a bill like Bill C-4, which could quickly kill over 20,000 jobs, particularly in Quebec, but also across Canada.

[*English*]

Mr. Rob Clarke: Mr. Speaker, it is kind of ironic, listening to my colleague across the floor ask the same repetitive question over and over again. This is the same official party that rejects any type of economic stimulus to help Canada grow.

We are seeing the government doing just that. I would like to point out a couple of things that we have done. I hate to be repetitive, but since 2006 we have cut taxes over 160 times, reducing the overall tax burden to its lowest level in 50 years.

We are seeing this take place and we are seeing the economic benefit assisting Saskatchewan, my home province. We are seeing it flourish. We are seeing it become an economic driving hub across Canada. We are seeing jobs being created. We are seeing individuals leaving other provinces and coming to Saskatchewan to work, because the jobs are there. We are seeing economic development take place.

That is why the government is reducing taxes, to help people create a better, more financial and fiscally responsible lifestyle.

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague from across the way talked about the Canadian corporate tax rates being lower than those in the U.S. I do not see a lot of companies lining up to come to Canada because of that. There are other things going on.

I should also point out an example of something else that is going on. Quite often I find that Canadian managers of R and D cannot get the large global corporations, often headquartered in the United States, to do their R and D in Canada. The proposals are just not as good as what they get from other countries where some of the subsidies are bigger.

An example of what is going on is that, in budget 2012, the government decided that it would reduce the scientific research and experimental development tax credit, and replace that with a system of direct grants.

We heard in the finance committee a couple of weeks ago that there is a delay. The cuts in SR and ED are already occurring, but replacement by the grants has been slow to happen. Therefore, a witness in committee told us that something like \$300 million in investment has not been made. That amounts to something like 2,000 ongoing jobs.

I would like to ask my colleague to comment on that.

Mr. Rob Clarke: Mr. Speaker, what we see is what Canada is doing to lure businesses to the country, or to have more individuals hired in.

What this Conservative government is doing is extending and expanding the hiring credit for small businesses, which will benefit an estimated 560,000 employees. We are also increasing the indexing of the lifetime capital gains exemption to make investing in small business more rewarding. Also, we are expanding the accelerated capital cost allowance to further encourage investments in clean energy generation.

One of the most important things here is freezing the employment insurance premium rates for three years, leaving \$660 million in the pockets of job creators and workers in 2014 alone.

• (1615)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will start by responding directly to the speech of the colleague to whom I asked a question.

I am always repeating the same question because I never get an answer from the government. There is a specific measure set out in Bill C-4 that could result in the loss of 20,000 jobs in Quebec, and the member is telling me about the jobs that will be created in Saskatchewan.

Does he really mean to say that Bill C-4 will create jobs in certain locations and eliminate them in others? In fact, that is exactly what Bill C-4 will do.

The issue of labour-sponsored funds is crucial. This model for economic development has worked well in Quebec. Since labour-sponsored funds were created in 1983, this economic model has strengthened the role of Quebec and Canada in raising venture capital funds in order to develop emerging leading-edge sectors for the country. This has happened not only in Quebec but also in the rest of the country, because other provinces followed suit with other models for labour-sponsored funds.

These funds have not only been useful in raising venture capital levels but also in raising savings levels. Quebec used to be one of the provinces where people saved the least, but now it is among those where people save the most. Speculators and large corporations are not the ones who are investing in the Fonds de solidarité FTQ and the Fondation. It is small investors, workers. These people decided to put money aside, but they did not choose to invest in major hedge funds or mutual funds made up of mostly stocks and bonds. They were prepared to accept a greater share of the risk.

We know that venture capital that is invested in labour-sponsored funds or private venture capital funds is unsecured. For example, if things go bad, then one becomes a creditor. These funds are provided to a company and the creditor, which is actually a venture capital fund, is at the bottom of the creditor pecking order.

This model has worked well in Quebec, despite what the government says. How do I know? It is obvious. If Quebec were an OECD member country, it would currently rank third in terms of venture capital in relation to GDP—its economic size—behind Israel and the United States. It invests in proportion to its economy. It is nearly three times the Canadian average and four times the Ontario average.

The government's proposal to gradually eliminate the tax credit is something that Ontario did in 2005. Since then, the venture capital rates in Ontario have been steadily decreasing and now represent just 36% of Canada's venture capital. There is a cause-effect relationship here.

Quebec's rate has reached 36%, even though its economy is much smaller than Ontario's. The two have the same proportion even though they have very different economic levels.

How significant are venture capital and labour-sponsored funds in Quebec?

Labour-sponsored funds represent over \$10 billion in capital. At the beginning of the debate at second reading, the member for Beauce said that 10% of this capital is invested, but that is not true. He would repeat that to anyone who would listen.

Every year, investments are renewed, which means that 10% is reinvested. Obviously, when the capital is invested in a business that operates well, the funds will eventually withdraw the capital to invest it elsewhere.

However, Quebec law requires labour-sponsored funds to invest at least 60% of their assets in venture capital or development capital every year. I repeat: 60%.

Labour-sponsored funds generally surpass that objective. Right now, 67% of all that capital is invested. We are talking about nearly \$7 billion invested in innovation, research and development, and it also goes to help struggling businesses and start-ups, in order to help Quebec develop.

I believe that this model could be adapted to the Canadian model. This is a model that is universally supported.

If our Conservative friends had bothered to listen to the submissions, particularly those made to the Standing Committee

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on Finance, they would have noted that opposition to this tax credit goes well beyond the two labour-sponsored funds targeted.

• (1620)

Canada's Venture Capital and Private Equity Association opposes abolishing this tax credit because private venture capital works hand in hand with labour-sponsored funds. The Fédération des chambres de commerce du Québec also opposes this measure. The Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal, the Regroupement des jeunes chambres de commerce du Québec and the Manufacturiers et exportateurs du Québec all oppose this measure because they know the impact it will have.

The government relied on only two studies to support its position, if we can actually call them studies. The first comes from the School of Public Policy at the University of Calgary and dates back to three or four years ago. The second is an OECD study from 2006.

These studies clearly show that the OECD and the School of Public Policy at the University of Calgary have no understanding whatsoever of the complex role played by the two labour-sponsored funds, particularly in Quebec.

There are examples of development outside Quebec, but the fact remains that this is fundamentally a Quebec phenomenon. The study by the University of Calgary's School of Public Policy states that it is not really venture capital. The amounts are much smaller. The role of these labour-sponsored funds is extremely complex and there are two types: development capital and risk capital. Both are needed in a region such as mine, where there is insufficient venture capital. These funds can serve regions ignored by private capital.

There is another important aspect. I am addressing my remarks in particular to those members who represent rural areas, areas outside a large city or major urban centre.

Obviously, risk capital is more readily and disproportionately available in major cities. Regions such as mine and the Lower St. Lawrence need this capital to develop. For that reason, labour-sponsored funds have specific funds for regions not served by private venture capital or development capital. Thus, labour-sponsored funds play a very crucial role.

I am surprised to see the government acting so nonchalantly and not justifying its position. The government wants to eliminate the tax credit gradually, even though it knows what happened in Ontario. Ontario is no longer a leader in terms of venture capital and development capital.

I asked a government official some questions. How can the government take this position without conducting any studies? Was there an impact study on venture capital? The answer was no. Was there an impact study on savings? The official told me no. The last question I asked is probably the most serious: was a study conducted to compare what these two types of funds offered and what the government has offered?

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What the two funds offered the government in exchange for not phasing out this tax credit was to accept the venture capital action plan proposed by the government. The government is taking away the equivalent of \$355 million from the tax credit over five years, while allocating \$400 million to launch the venture capital action plan. The two funds said they wanted to put a cap on the share offering and reduce the government's tax cost by 30%. In return, they proposed investing \$2 billion over 10 years in the venture capital action plan. The government has only \$400 million invested. The funds said they would invest five times more than what the government invested. The Minister of Finance refused. He wants to eliminate the tax credit. How does that make any sense? If the government were really serious about wanting to develop venture capital in Canada, it would have accepted and jumped all over the offer made by the two funds, which work hand in hand with all funds and private venture capital funds.

Preserving this particular measure is extremely important. I have made it my own personal cause, as the opposition and government members know very well. Indeed, this issue is critical and crucial to economic development in Quebec—development that this government is jeopardizing. At this time, the funds support 160,000 jobs, and studies have shown that 20,000 of those jobs will disappear if the government goes ahead with this measure.

I implore the government to carefully assess the impact this will have. If it really cares about job creation and economic growth, it will remove those parts of the bill in order to ensure a better future for Quebec and the rest of Canada.

• (1625)

[*English*]

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member and his comments. What struck me was the negativity from the member. It was negative, negative, negative. He did not highlight any of the positive aspects of the budget, not even one.

His province of Quebec, like my province of Manitoba, receives a lot of payments through the federal transfers. I wonder if he could at least acknowledge that Quebec benefits from these billions of dollars in transfers, as I am happy to acknowledge that Manitoba benefits from the billions of dollars it receives from the federal government.

Will the member say thanks to the federal government for the transfer payments?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, I hope that the current government is not taking credit for transfer payments.

If we look only at the transfer payments for health, in last year's budget, the government cut the increase in those transfers from 6% to 3% a year. Yes, the transfers will continue to increase, but only by half as much at a time when we will have to deal with an aging population and a demographic curve that will require us to invest more in health. The government has capped the increase in those transfers.

I talked about only one aspect of Bill C-4, and my colleague from Parkdale—High Park mentioned quite a bit more. I am actually focusing on the elimination of the tax credit, which will have an

adverse effect on Quebec in particular, when the Quebec model should be adopted across the country so that everyone can benefit from it. Venture capital and development capital are crucial for Canada's economic development.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's comments on the bill. I understand and appreciate the value of venture capital funds. In fact, if the member were to google the Crocus fund, which did not really work out too well, it did create lots of opportunities and economic wealth for the province of Manitoba.

That said, when we look at the amendments that have been brought forward and the bill as a whole, we see a budget bill once again that is changing all sorts of legislation. There is great substance we could talk about in regard to the budget component, but it is the 85%-plus of the other aspects of the bill that cause a great deal of concern in regard to the government sneaking all sorts of legislative changes in through the back door.

I am wondering if the hon. member might provide a comment on that aspect of the legislation.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Winnipeg North for his important question.

He talked about the Crocus Investment Fund. There are examples that have worked well and others that have not worked so well.

For example, when the Ontario government abolished its tax credit, it implemented an action plan, the Ontario Venture Capital Fund, which is what the government is proposing today. For that fund to work, the labour-sponsored funds in Quebec had to invest heavily in it in order to sustain it.

We have concerns about a number of other aspects of the bill. That is why we proposed 24 amendments, the Liberal Party proposed 6 and the Green Party proposed almost 30. Some aspects of the bill need to be corrected.

This is fourth budget implementation bill I have debated in committee and, again, I see that none of the amendments were accepted, as was the case the last three times.

I do not see how I could accept such a budget when we made reasonable proposals to amend it. The government constantly says no.

• (1630)

[*English*]

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 questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for York South—Weston, Housing; the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, The Environment.

Resuming debate, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and for International Human Rights.

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Hon. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and for International Human Rights, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to speak about the job-creating measures that would be implemented by today's legislation.

Let me start by saying what Lori Mathison, chair of the government budget and finance committee of the Vancouver Board of Trade, said, and I will quote it very slowly so the opposition can listen to this:

The Government is demonstrating a commitment to returning to a balanced budget in the short term, but at the same time, supporting economic growth and job creation.

Given the state of the global economy—where we are [all] seeing recessions, drops in national and sub-national credit ratings, and out-of-control deficits—we are truly fortunate in Canada to be contemplating balanced budgets, receiving AAA credit ratings, and growing our GDP.

Ms. Mathison has captured the essence of what this government has been doing.

Our Conservative government recognizes that small businesses are the engines of job creation in Canada. My wife Neena ran a small business for over 10 years. Therefore, I know the challenges that are faced by small businesses.

Today's legislation would extend and expand the hiring credit for small businesses. The credit would provide needed relief to small businesses by helping to defray the costs of hiring new workers and allowing them to take advantage of the emerging economic opportunities. Indeed, it is estimated that 560,000 small businesses would benefit from this measure, saving them \$225 million in 2013.

It would also increase the rewards of investing in small business and make it easier for owners to transfer their businesses to the next generation of Canadians by increasing and indexing the lifetime capital gains exemption. There would be up to \$800,000 of capital gains realized by an individual on qualifying property that would be exempt from the tax.

It is no surprise that small business owners are happy about these changes. Indeed, the president of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, Dan Kelly, had this to say about these measures:

The big change for small business is the extension and expansion of the EI hiring credit [...] On top of that, they've expanded the lifetime capital gains exemption to \$800,000. That's really good news, with a promise to index it each year going forward. That will help a lot of entrepreneurs.

That was said to the CTV News Channel, in 2013.

However, that is not all.

To ensure the predictability and the stability around the EI program rates, these measures would set the EI premium rates for 2015 and 2016 at \$1.88 per every hundred dollars of insurable earnings.

As announced this past September, our government said it would freeze the EI premium rates for the next three years. By doing this, the government would be promoting stability and predictability for employers and employees. It would also leave \$660 million in the pockets of employers and workers in 2014.

I would like to take this opportunity to speak about other measures in the budget. Indeed, as today's legislation clearly shows, our Conservative government is squarely focused on creating jobs, economic growth and securing Canada's long-term prosperity.

It has been with the help of the Canada economic action plan that Canada has experienced one of the best economic performances among G7 countries during the global economic recession and throughout the recovery.

Canada has created over one million net new jobs since the depth of the global recession in July 2009. This is the strongest job creation record in the entire G7, by far. What is more, Canada's unemployment rate is at its lowest level since December 2008 and remains below that of the U.S.

That is why both the International Monetary Fund and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development project that Canada will have among the strongest growth in the G7 countries in years ahead.

● (1635)

However, as we have repeatedly said, Canada's economy is not immune to economic challenges from 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 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 for the future.

Indeed, the key task for all countries is to balance efforts to support job creation and economic growth while respecting commitments to reduce deficits and return to balanced budgets over the medium term. That is exactly what we have been doing in Canada. Last week, as confirmed by the government's annual financial report, we are on track to balance the budget in 2015. Let me repeat that for the opposition. We are on track to balance the budget in 2015, while eliminating wasteful spending and ineffective government programs. In fact, the deficit last year fell to \$18.9 billion, down by more than one quarter; \$7.4 billion from the deficit in 2011-12; and down by nearly two-thirds from 2009-10.

Most importantly, we are doing this without raising taxes. In fact, we have cut taxes over 160 times since forming government. That has reduced the tax burden on the average family of four by \$3,220. Taken together, this fiscal management has resulted in Canada having a net debt-to-GDP ratio of 34.6% in 2012, the lowest level among the G7 countries, with Germany being the second lowest at 57.2% and the G7 average at 90.4%. All of this has been done by this government's strong management of the economy.

Despite the fearmongering by the opposition, this has not changed. Canadians can rest assured that the health and safety of workers is very important to workplace relations. The health and safety of workers is a key priority for the government. That is why today's legislation would allow more oversight around the enforcement of occupational health and safety standards.

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While I have the floor, I want to say this. As has been announced, we are in negotiations now to complete our free trade agreement with the European Union. Having the NAFTA agreement, the European Union agreement and waiting for the TPP to come along, as well as the economic partnership with India and other countries, Canada is poised to have markets opened to it. The business community all across this country will be able to take advantage of this free trade agreement. By signing all of these economic trade deals, we are poised to go into unprecedented market availability for our businesses. What does that mean? It means, jobs, job, jobs. As the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance have said, it is jobs, jobs, jobs. That is the key priority of Canadians.

This government has done this through its budget implementation and trade deals, all opposed of course by the NDP and the Liberal Party. The NDP, thank goodness, has never had a chance to work on our economy. Otherwise, it would be the last. I am very happy to be associated with a government that has very strong control of where our economy is moving and is meeting the aspirations of Canadians so they can have jobs, jobs, jobs, not just now but for future generations.

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member mentioned the OECD. I am glad that he did because the report last week from the OECD said that Canada has seen a rising gap between seniors who are falling into poverty and those who are doing okay.

The OECD reported just last week that a comprehensive study on global pensions by the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development showed that Canadians over 65 years of age are relatively okay compared to most others. There is one exception, which is that the average poverty rate for those 65 and older has grown to 7.2% during the last number of years. In other words, the poverty rate for seniors has gone up and the government is looking at attacking pensions.

I wonder if the member could explain his rosy disposition over there vis-à-vis the real economy and the seniors who are being hit hard.

● (1640)

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Mr. Speaker, this government has done more for seniors than anybody else has done since the Liberal government.

We have a dedicated minister addressing the issues of seniors. We have a dedicated minister doing that. As a matter of fact, since we formed the government we have created a pension split. We have done everything possible for seniors. I agree with the member that seniors are the ones who built this country and are why we are here today.

When I speak about this rosy picture that we are talking about with this government, it has all been built on the hard work of the seniors who, I want to tell the member, work very hard and have Conservative values. They also look for balanced budgets. Their values are what the government is espousing.

I can tell the member that this government will always stand for seniors.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are many different things I could take exception to in terms of what the member has said in his presentation on the bill.

Let me focus on his last answer. He said that the government stands with the seniors and tries to give the impression that they are doing well for our seniors, when in fact the government is actually increasing the age of retirement for our seniors from 65 to 67. That is the government's intention.

We have the Parliamentary Budget Officer, many different stakeholders and professionals saying that it is just not warranted; it is not necessary. However, this is something that the government is plowing ahead with.

Instead of being a cheerleader for the PMO and the Prime Minister, I am wondering if the member would be able to clearly indicate to the House how increasing the age of retirement from 65 to 67 is going to help seniors, particularly in terms of dealing with issues surrounding poverty and so forth.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Mr. Speaker, I want to tell the member that I am no cheerleader for the PMO. I am telling exactly the facts of what is happening out there in the economy.

Under the member's government, handling the economy was a disaster. That is why the Liberals are sitting at the far end, and if they continue talking like this, they may be on their way out.

Let me say one thing on raising the retirement age from 65 to 67. We have a Canadian pension plan that needs to be viable. It is not only that, but today people are living longer and longer. It is their desire to work. Under the Canada pension plan, people can retire, even at age 60 if they want.

The point is that today people would like to work, and we would like them to work, because they are healthy people. I do not know what the member's problem is.

Most important, we need to address this issue so that the pension is available for future generations as well, not just for the immediate generation.

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the speech on the bill by my colleague, the parliamentary secretary, and I would disagree with him profoundly in virtually everything. Virtually every aspect that he raised about the bill I find great fault with.

I would like to begin by finding great fault with not just the content of the bill but the whole process by which the Conservatives are abusing our system of parliamentary democracy. Under the guise of the budget implementation act, they are introducing what is tantamount to a neo-Conservative wish list, like a catalogue for the Tea Party Republican Party. It is everything they would ever like to do rolled up into one big ball, free from scrutiny and oversight from the opposition parties and from the people of Canada.

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As the representatives who represent the majority of Canadians, we will never be able to do justice to a massive tome like this. The Conservatives have stuffed 60 and 70 pieces of legislation into one. They are pieces of legislation that are not even related, things that are fiscal and non-fiscal, things that have to do with the Labour Relations Act, things that have to do with a new Mackenzie gas project.

The scope and the scale of this thing makes it so unwieldy that we simply cannot do a detailed analysis on these pieces of legislation, even though many are broad and sweeping social policy changes that we will have to live with for many years until such time as the New Democratic Party forms the government and we can restore some semblance of order and balance to the nation.

The Conservatives do not have to pack a lunch, because it is sneaking up on them. The more they abuse, undermine, and try to cut a swathe through everything that is good and decent about our parliamentary democracy, the more motivated the general public will be to show these people the door.

I do not have time—and this is the whole point, that none of us have time—to deal in any kind of detail with any of these pieces of legislation rolled up into one. However, I will mention one, just because it offends me so profoundly, and that is the fact that the Conservatives have seen fit, under the guise of a budget implementation bill, to amend the Canada Labour Code to change the definition of what is dangerous work. You tell me, Mr. Speaker, what undermining the health and safety provisions within the Canada Labour Code has to do with the budget implementation act.

I do not know if people have had time to think this through. I can guarantee they have not, because not only are the Conservatives ramming through 70 pieces of legislation at once, but they move closure at every stage of these bills. As a result, we cannot call a sufficient number of witnesses, we cannot give it the debate it deserves in the House of Commons, we cannot test the merits of their argument with informed exchange and information to see that we are passing good laws and good legislation, as per the prayer that the Speaker reads when we open Parliament every day. That is by the wayside.

The Conservatives should explain to me what it has to do with the economy, with jobs, or with good governance generally to gut the Labour Code under that particular definition of what constitutes dangerous work, specifically as it pertains to maternal care. It is doubly offensive to me that an individual no longer has the right to refuse unsafe work if she is a pregnant mother working in circumstances that she believes may be harmful to the unborn child. That reference has been entirely deleted.

The Conservatives not only amend 60 or 70 pieces of legislation at once, they create whole brand new ones within the context of their budget implementation act. They sometimes delete whole pieces of legislation. In their last omnibus bill, they deleted a piece of legislation called the Fair Wages Act. For some reason, the Conservative government is opposed to the concept of fair wages, opposed to setting minimum wages in the construction industry on federally regulated projects.

In whose interest is it to drive down the wages of middle-class Canadian workers? We do not need our government to do that for us. There are enough economic forces out there that can affect our income. We really do not elect a government to drive down our wages, yet the Conservatives saw fit to do so, singing to some tune.

● (1645)

I presume it was the merit shop guy, Terrance Oakey, who seems to have a revolving door to the PMO to dictate what he seems to need in his particular industry sector.

By what pretzel logic could it possibly be argued that it is in the best interests of Canadians to gut the safety provisions of the Canada Labour Code? It is simply beyond me. Regarding the changes to EI, again, if a budget implementation act is about enabling the implementation of the budget, why does it not deal with relevant issues that may in fact stimulate the economy?

I heard my colleague, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, talking about enabling small businesses to create more jobs. If the government really believed that, we would be debating legislation that would reduce the business tax for small businesses. The Conservatives argue that they would reduce it from 12% to 11%, but in the socialist paradise of Manitoba, when we were elected, the Conservatives had the small business tax at 11%, and every year thereafter the NDP lowered it by 1%, and another per cent, and another per cent to where—

● (1650)

Mr. Robert Sopuck: They upped the sales tax to 8%.

Mr. Pat Martin: Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette might want to tell the MPs assembled here what the small business tax is in the socialist paradise of Manitoba right now—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Robert Sopuck: It is 8% sales tax in Manitoba and 5% in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Pat Martin: My colleague from Ottawa Centre knows that it is a big fat goose egg. It is zero. If the Conservatives would walk the talk and put their money where their mouth is and do a favour for small businesses, they would eliminate the small business tax.

It is another illusion. It is a facade.

My colleague from Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia, I think, supports the idea of eliminating the small business tax. He has seen the benefit in the province of Manitoba, which we call home.

The Conservatives are cutting, hacking, and slashing the big corporate tax rate for businesses that do not need a tax break. The banks and the big oil companies are the only ones that really benefit. It is only profitable businesses that would benefit from having their income tax lowered. A business that is not showing any income and that needs the support gets nothing from it, yet the Conservatives do nothing for the small businessperson.

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We could have celebrated. If the Conservatives had wanted to put a 71st detail into this budget implementation act to eliminate the business tax, they would have had the support of the NDP. However, it is disingenuous and it is misleading to lump fiscal details in with non-fiscal details in a bill that is supposed to be limited to just that.

How did we end up dealing with the selection of Supreme Court justices in the context of the budget implementation act? That alone is a subject that warrants a great deal of consideration by Parliament and by committee. We would want to deal with that at great length.

What about the selection process for new economic immigrants? We have an immigration issue finding its way into this bill. There is simply no time.

The Mackenzie gas project impacts fund act is the name of the bill that I was groping for earlier.

I see that I am almost out of time. That will be the whole sum total of time that I am going to have, as the member for Winnipeg Centre, representing 100,000-some Canadians, to comment on or provide scrutiny of, or oversight to, over 70 pieces of legislation. It is a travesty.

I do not want anybody in Canada who might be watching this to think that this is normal. There is nothing normal about this abuse of the democratic process that has found its way into these so-called omnibus bills. It is completely undemocratic and contrary to all of the principles of democracy. It offends the very sensibilities of anyone who considers themselves a democrat.

The New Democratic Party will allow proper oversight and scrutiny of the legislation that we introduce in 2015.

Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was very interested in my friend's comments about the socialist paradise of Manitoba. Recently the Manitoba New Democratic government raised the sales tax to 8%, as NDP governments always do.

As a member of Parliament who represents a constituency that borders on Saskatchewan, I know that the sales tax there is 5%. The Saskatchewan competitive advantage continues to grow, thanks to the ineptitude of Manitoba's NDP government.

I would like to ask my friend a question. Does he support the raising of the Manitoba sales tax to 8%? Does he want to see Canada's GST raised to 8%, 9%, or 10%?

• (1655)

Mr. Pat Martin: Mr. Speaker, let us talk instead about why the bill is dealing with veterans, reducing the number of permanent members from 28 to 25 on the Veterans Review and Appeal Board. In whose interest is it to reduce the number of representatives on the Veterans Review and Appeal Board? By what convoluted pretzel logic could the member for Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette support a piece of legislation that has such a profoundly negative effect on veterans, of all people?

Another impact for Manitoba specifically, where we have great big beautiful buildings, is that the Conservatives completely changed the mandate of the National Research Council. They laid off hundreds of Canada's top scientists and researchers. Did we debate this in any adequate way? No, we just learned about it when they

prorogued Parliament long enough to invent this neo-conservative wish list that is against the best interests of working people in every respect.

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that last question and answer moment feels like question period in reverse.

My question is related to the National Research Council, which my hon. colleague from the paradise of Manitoba just brought up. I am interested in whether he would like to comment on the reduction in the number of council members for the National Research Council from 19 to 12. As he may know, the NRC is undergoing some dramatic changes at the moment. It is surprising that only five of these council positions are filled. At this time of dramatic change, I wonder if the NRC really should be consulting more and should have a larger council. In this way it would be able to consult with councillors from both a broad geographic range and from the very diverse range of technical fields that the NRC is involved in.

Mr. Pat Martin: Mr. Speaker, my colleague will probably agree with me that it is absolutely unprecedented for this country's scientists to be forced into a situation of protesting outside Parliament Hill, wearing their white lab coats, to object to the systematic muzzling of scientists in almost every aspect across the board.

One that comes to mind in addition to the National Research Council is the Experimental Lakes Area in northwestern Ontario, bordering the Manitoba border. We finally found a way to stem the damage from cutbacks by the feds when we found the Ontario government was willing to chip in some money, but then just last week, all of the scientists received their pink slips. They were all laid off.

We worked for 18 months to find alternate funding to keep it open, and the Conservatives still got rid of all of those scientists. How is the operation going to be maintained now that all the scientists have been let go?

Conservatives do not just shoot the messenger, they undermine the ability of the messenger to even deliver a message. That is how anti-science they are. It is because science might get in the way of whatever agenda is being served. It is certainly not in the best interests of Canadians when we muzzle scientists, whether it is at the National Research Council or the Experimental Lakes Area in northwestern Ontario.

Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to contribute to today's debate on Bill C-4. This very important legislation for all of us is the next step in our government's continued effort to support job creation and economic growth in Canada.

Since 2006, our government has been taking concrete action to ensure that Canada's economy remains strong. After all, it was our government that acted in such a fiscally responsible manner so we were able to weather the global economic storm better than most other industrialized nations. I feel as though I should remind the members of the opposition of this fact, as it is a fact they seem to frequently forget. Thankfully, Canadians remember.

Remember when faced with the worst global recession since the Great Depression, our government responded with Canada's economic action plan. This plan included investments in infrastructure and tax relief for families and was instrumental in fuelling growth and putting Canadians back to work. Since then, this has helped create over one million net new jobs, the majority of which are high-wage, full-time, private sector positions. That is the strongest job creation in the G7 by far.

Our 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. Indeed, the IMF and OECD both project that Canada will have among the strongest growth in the G7 in the years ahead. All of the major credit rating agencies have affirmed Canada's AAA rating for the sixth straight year. The World Economic Forum rated our banking system the world's best. This is a record Canadians can be proud of.

With that said, allow me to share with members one of the most significant factors behind Canada's economic success: keeping taxes low. Unlike the high tax the NDP 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. In fact, since 2006, our government has cut taxes more than 160 times, reducing the overall tax burden to the lowest level in 50 years.

I would like to now talk about the speech and the comments by the previous speaker, the member for Winnipeg Centre, who is an icon for the NDP. He represents the NDP's toxic view of the economy. While the Liberals have no policy and no ideas, the NDP policies are purely toxic when it comes to the economy, and the environment as well for that matter. The New Democrats oppose free markets and free trade, two policies that have lifted the world out of economic depression time and time again. The New Democrats have no idea about how to create wealth. They are really good at spending money.

In fact, I saw a cartoon once of an NDP cabinet minister's day-timer. Monday was spend; Tuesday was spend, spend; Wednesday was spend, spend; Thursday was off for a rest; and Friday was spend, spend. That is all the NDP knows how to do. The New Democrats do not understand the concept of a sound business climate either. I hate to break it to my NDP friends, but before one can spend money, one has to earn it. What a revolutionary concept that is. It is through free markets and free trade that we create the wealth so we can support our cherished social programs. I should add that most of Canada's major social programs were instituted by Conservative governments.

I should make the point that the NDP's failed economic policies have been tried around the world. Look at Greece, France, Italy, the city of Detroit, the city of Chicago. High spending, high public sector wages and high tax drove those cities and those countries to economic ruin.

The other dirty little secret of the Liberals and the New Democrats is that they actually want people dependent on government. Through their policies, they worm their way into society and create more and more dependence on governments. That I find utterly shameful.

The situation of Saskatchewan is most instructive. Saskatchewan was stagnant under the previous NDP government. As soon as the

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Saskatchewan Party took over, instituting sound Conservative policies, the Saskatchewan economy took off. That is a story that Canadians are only beginning to appreciate, that Saskatchewan has gone from a have not province to a net contributor to the equalization program of Canada. If there are any Saskatchewan MPs here, they deserve a round of applause because their government in Saskatchewan has created an economic miracle in Saskatchewan by implementing Conservative economic policies.

● (1700)

For the members opposite, I like to quote the Iron Lady, Margaret Thatcher, who said, "The facts of life are conservative and nobody can dispute that".

Going back to what we are doing in our budget, a small business' bottom line is significantly impacted by the cost of EI. As it stands right now, employers pay 60% of the current EI system. We, more than any other party, understand that small business is the cornerstone of our economy, creating jobs that support families in our communities. That is why we are freezing EI premiums for the next three years. We are promoting stability and predictability for job creators and workers and we are leaving \$660 million in their pockets in 2014 alone. Rather than spending money on payroll taxes, it can be used by small business owners to hire more employees and grow their businesses.

Despite what the opposition would have us believe, this tax relief will help support Canada's continued economic recovery and sustain business-led long-term growth. This is fantastic news for Canada's entrepreneurs, but do not take my word for it. Let us see what other people are saying.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business, which speaks for the small business community and which the member for Winnipeg Centre spoke about, said the move to freeze EI rates for three years will "keep hundreds of millions of dollars in the pockets of employers and employees which can only be a positive for the Canadian economy".

The Canadian Home Builders' Association said:

We congratulate the Government on its support of job growth by reducing the burden on businesses...This move will support stable financial planning for businesses, and therefore job growth.

Lower employment costs will also encourage businesses—and particularly small business—to invest in younger workers, helping to address the critical need to develop the next generation of skilled tradespeople...

That is not all. This is what the Retail Council of Canada said:

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The retail sector is Canada's largest employer and as a result bears the bulk of the burden of paying into the EI system. This freeze on premiums will mean more money for employers to invest in other important areas such as employment, training and infrastructure...As a small business owner, I applaud Minister...for recognizing that even the smallest tax relief goes a long way to helping businesses grow and thrive.

Unlike the opposition, we will not attack job creators with massive tax hikes. While we are focused on fostering growth in our economy, the NDP and Liberals are busy opposing measures that help small business and small business is the engine of growth for our society. Indeed, as a member of Parliament who represents a very large rural constituency composed of dozens and dozens of small communities, small business is what makes my region grow and thrive. I have hundreds of small businesses and I am always struck by the work ethic of these entrepreneurs who day in and day out work to make our communities better places to live.

I really hope the members opposite will change their tune and support efforts to create jobs and growth for Canadians, instead of pushing high tax schemes to kill jobs, like the NDP's infamous \$20 billion carbon tax, a multi-billion dollar tax hike on jobs. Indeed, the leader of the Liberals is talking again about a carbon price. If they want to make amends, they can start right now and vote in favour of this bill.

I should note in terms of my own constituency, the Canada-European free trade agreement that was recently negotiated is a huge boon for my community. For example, Manitoba is the largest hog producer in the country. Interestingly, Canada produces some 25 million tonnes of hogs and pork every year. That is about equivalent to the increase in pork consumption worldwide. Europe is a major market for Canadian pork and this is very important for my communities, my producers and the people who process hogs in my constituency.

On this last note, I ask that all members of the House support Bill C-4. It is important that we implement these job creation measures as soon as possible.

• (1705)

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I cannot believe what I am hearing from the other side. I mean, this is a budget bill, which was an omnibus bill that was not separated. Over and over government continues to table these bills, and this one in particular has items in it that are not even related to the budget. That is extremely shameful.

Now the Conservatives are trying to tell us how good they are fiscally, but we know that is not right, it is not true, because we have the largest deficit in Canadian history under the Conservative government.

To say that people are better off because of the government is shameful. I happened to have met the other day with a veteran. He was saying that he used to get two hearing aids at the same time, but all of a sudden he now being told that he could only get one now and then had to wait six months for another one. How shameful is that at a time when the Conservatives are spending tens of millions of dollars on the economic action plan? Maybe the member could explain that, while Canadians are being denied employment insurance and their on old age security is being reduced. On whose back are they cutting?

• (1710)

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Mr. Speaker, one of the things that makes me so proud of being part of this Conservative majority government is that everything this government predicted has worked out.

When the recession of 2008 hit, our government did the right thing. It sprang into action and built Canada's economic action plan. We invested in job creation. One particular program that worked exceedingly well was the home renovation tax credit, which created thousands of jobs and helped Canadian home owners fix their homes. When our economy got back on track, we ramped spending down. Those were temporary programs.

Everything our Prime Minister predicted is coming true and next year the balanced budget will come to pass exactly as we predicted. We will be the envy of the world in terms of our fiscal situation.

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed listening to my colleague's speech. It seemed to me to be one of those absolutist Conservative speeches. He is very confident in what he believes in, and good for him. I am also glad he likes to read the cartoons so he knows what the other parties think.

In the spring, the Liberal Party tried to amend the previous budget implementation bill, Bill C-45, to extend the small business hiring credit and increase the maximum threshold from \$10,000 to \$15,000. I guess we should compliment the government's legislation when it is time to do that. I agree with what the government has done in Bill C-4. It rejected the Liberal amendment earlier this spring, but it has decided to take the Liberal idea and implement it in Bill C-4. I guess the Conservatives thought about things over the summer and decided that what the Liberals were calling for was the right thing to do, and so I commend the government on adopting that Liberal idea.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Mr. Speaker, I did not hear a question there, but I thank my hon. friend for his kind words. Again, in all seriousness, good ideas should be looked at and implemented wherever they are found.

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Minister of State (Western Economic Diversification), CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to address my colleague from Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette and talk about his moose hunting expeditions. I credit him for that this year.

I have a very quick question with regard to the importance of balanced budgets to his constituents. It is something our government strove for in terms of seeing Canada's long-term economic prosperity.

We understand we need to be good stewards with our money in Ottawa. Could the member speak on the importance of this to his constituents and how it is an important part of this legislation?

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. friend and, yes, I am a member of the underground moose hunting economy for sure.

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In terms of balanced budgets, it is critical for our country. For Canada, it means that no matter what economic storm comes at us, we will be able to react like we did in 2008 with Canada's economic action plan. If a household has paid off all of its credit card bills and mortgage, no matter what happens economically, that household will be able to look after itself, which is the position Canada is in now. Thank goodness for that.

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it was interesting to listen to the member's speech. It is as though we are living in a parallel universe. The people I have talked to are worried about the fact that funds for social housing are disappearing, that child and family poverty in parts of our country have not gone down, that people are working two and three jobs just to feed their children and that student loan debt is increasing. Municipalities have been calling on the government to invest in infrastructure, whether it is sewer, water or roads.

With respect to the environment, over the last couple of weeks we saw Canada being castigated on the world stage for its grim record on greenhouse gas emission reductions, plus any of the other initiatives we might be taking around prevention and mitigation. Our former leader, the late Jack Layton, used to say that we needed to talk about the fact that it was fine to fix the roof, but it did not do us any good if the foundation was crumbling. I would argue that the foundation in Canada is crumbling under the government's watch.

With regard to Bill C-4, the NDP is opposing it both on process and content. This is just like the three previous omnibus budget bills, C-38, C-45 and C-60.

Bill C-4 would amend 70 pieces of legislation. It contains two entirely new acts, the Mackenzie gas project impacts fund act and the public service labour relations and employment board. In talking about this, I want to refer to the process for one moment. It is our responsibility as parliamentarians to thoroughly review legislation that comes before us, to call witnesses and propose amendments. We are not able to do that in this current democratic deficit climate.

I want to quote a couple of people who have commented on the government process with regard to omnibus bills.

In *iPolitics*, former finance officials Scott Clark and Peter DeVries stated:

Budget vagueness is a troubling trend. Vagueness and obtuseness have featured in successive budgets, with details provided in the omnibus budget bills. The real budget has now become the budget omnibus bill. This undermines the credibility and transparency of the budget and requires much more diligence in assessing budget proposals.

Andrew Coyne stated:

Not only does this make a mockery of the confidence convention—shielding bills that would otherwise be defeatable within a money bill, which is not—it makes it impossible to know what Parliament really intended by any of it. We've no idea whether MPs supported or opposed any particular bill in the bunch, only that they voted for the legislation that contained them. There is no common thread that runs between them, no overarching principle; they represent not a single act of policy, but a sort of compulsory buffet....But there is something quite alarming about Parliament being obliged to rubber-stamp the government's whole legislative agenda at one go.

I could not agree more with Mr. Coyne.

The challenge here is that time after time we have heard the government get up and say that the NDP has voted against *X*. What it does not say is that it was an omnibus budget bill that would change

several different pieces of acts and regulations. Perhaps there were pieces of the legislation that we agreed with but also pieces we could not agree with. Therefore, we do a balancing act. We take a look at the overall public good, then we determine whether we will vote for or against. Unfortunately, with the way the government acts, we largely end up voting against its omnibus budget bills because we do not see them as being in the public good overall.

I want to highlight some of the changes proposed by this legislation. As I mentioned, it will amend or repeal 70 pieces of legislation in over 300 pages. It strips health and safety officers of their powers and puts nearly all of these powers into the hands of the minister. It significantly weakens the ability of employees to refuse work in unsafe conditions. It moves to eliminate binding arbitration as a method to resolve disputes in the public service. It guts Canada's most venerable scientific research institution, the National Research Council. It reduces the number of permanent members on the Veterans Review and Appeal Board and repeals the Canada Employment Insurance Financing Board. It pushes ahead with the Conservatives' ill-advised \$350 million tax hike on labour-sponsored ventured capital funds and allows for three directors of the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board to be non-Canadian residents.

Many of the changes that proposed deserved separate legislation so we could have had that kind of thorough review. Instead, we have a bill that was rammed through and presented to three different committees in very limited time frames. Any amendments that were proposed by the official opposition or the opposition parties were rejected out of hand.

• (1715)

That is not good governance. That is what the Conservatives claim they stand for in this country: good governance, accountability, and transparency. None of those three are true.

I just want to touch on the Parliamentary Budget Officer for just one moment, another officer of Parliament who has been under attack by the government. He has been forced to go to court to try to get documents to demonstrate what kinds of savings are being proposed by the government.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer estimated that the overall impact of budget 2012, fiscal update 2012, and budget 2013 would be a loss of 67,000 jobs by 2017 and a 0.57% reduction in GDP. This is a significant decline in economic growth.

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That leads me to the smoke and mirrors games played by the Conservatives. An article from November 13, on *Global News*, indicated that the government had “sat on more than \$10 billion in funds Parliament approved and Canadians were told they could expect in 2012-13 through a slew of programs in dozens of departments”.

The federal government held on to more than \$10 billion it was expected to spend in 2012-13, with almost half coming from two departments, according to recently published financial documents. These were funds Parliament approved and Canadians were told they could expect...including the Senate Ethics Officer, disability and death compensation at Veterans Affairs, and weather and environmental services for Canadians at Environment Canada.

I want to touch on one particular part of this fund, and that is Transport Canada. I do not know where most members live and whether the municipalities where they live are suffering the kinds of infrastructure deficits many of our communities are suffering from. Many of our communities have aging infrastructure, and this is a deficit that is being passed on to future generations, because we have refused consistently over decades to provide the federal contribution to updating and upgrading the infrastructure.

Interestingly, Transport Canada, with Infrastructure Canada, had the most trouble spending its budget.

In 2012-13, that department was responsible for almost \$1.6 billion of Transport's overall \$2.5 billion lapse, according to the Public Accounts...

Within Infrastructure Canada, a large chunk of the lapse in 2012-13 came from the Building Canada Fund, an \$8.8 billion project announced in 2007. The project was set up to support national, regional, and municipal projects related to public transit, green energy and drinking water, among other priorities.

Last year, the two components of the funds—the “major infrastructure” and “community” components—were together slated to spend more than \$2.2 billion. Only \$1.1 billion made it out the door.

That is shameful. If that is the way the government is going to move toward balancing the budget, it is balancing the budget on the backs of our communities.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer suggested, in a review of the supplementary estimates, that the government has been unable to spend approximately \$10 billion of the budgetary authorities provided by Parliament over each of the past three years. As such,

Parliamentarians may wish to seek clarification regarding why this level of unspent money remains so high, what measures will be undertaken by departments and agencies to ensure that spending directed by Parliament occurs, and whether all of the \$5.4 billion sought in these supplementary estimates is actually required.

That is just one example. I just want to close by saying that child poverty is not even being tackled in this budget. I want to point to the grim record in British Columbia, where child and family poverty has simply not been tackled. There is absolutely a federal government role in this, and I would actually encourage members in this House to support my Bill C-233, which proposes a poverty reduction plan. The federal government can take some leadership.

I have just a couple of numbers here. B.C. had a child poverty rate of 18.6%, the worst rate of any province in Canada using the before-tax, low-income cutoffs of Statistics Canada as the measure of poverty.

By any measure, I think each and every one of us in this House would agree that children should come first and that it is time for the government to actually demonstrate leadership by putting in place

programs and services that support our families and our communities.

• (1720)

Mr. Erin O'Toole (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the member might have had the opportunity last week to meet with the folks from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities.

The member spoke at length about the infrastructure challenges Canada faces but neglected to talk about a truly amazing achievement of our government that won wide praise throughout the municipalities in my riding. I would like the member to comment on the response by municipalities in her riding with respect to our dedicated gas-tax-sharing revenue for municipal level infrastructure. In our last budget, we locked that in and have indexed that important sharing with that level of government to address their infrastructure needs in the future.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Mr. Speaker, of course I have met with municipal councillors and regional districts. It is a little different in British Columbia in that we have regional districts.

I spoke to them about infrastructure spending, and one concern that was raised, as I pointed out in this *Global News* article, is that the government announces the money, but it actually does not spend it. If it does not spend it, if it does not get the money out the door, it does not actually help the bridges, roads, waste water treatment plants, or water treatment plants.

If the government is going to announce infrastructure money, it should make sure there is an adequate process in place to submit proposals in a timely manner, adequately assess them in a timely manner, and then cut the cheques. That is what needs to happen. It is fine to announce the dollars, but they need to be spent.

• (1725)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question to the member is about how the bill does not necessarily deal with budget issues.

This is of critical importance, because we have seen an assault on democracy in the House of Commons ever since we have had a Conservative majority government. It is a different approach of trying to bring legislation in through the back door by using a budget bill. It is a very sneaky way of doing it, but, most importantly, it denies the opportunity for members of Parliament to provide due diligence. It prevents bills that should be stand-alone bills from going to committee and having third reading and so forth, thereby, I believe, ultimately not allowing for the proper attention to be given to what should be a number of pieces of legislation. That is why Bill C-4 is such a destructive force on democracy in Canada.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Mr. Speaker, that is a very good question. In fact, we are seeing an erosion of the trust of Canadian citizens in the process. As I mentioned, when 70 different pieces of legislation and regulations are jammed together into one omnibus bill, it does not allow adequate oversight.

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If the government actually had confidence in the legislation it was proposing, it would propose stand-alone legislation and allow us the opportunity to bring witnesses forward, but it limits the time, limits the number of witnesses, and limits the ability to have oversight. It makes one wonder if it is actually afraid to hear criticism and afraid to have people turn their attention to the bill.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have received a lot of emails from my constituents with regard to this particular bill. One was from Murray Gore, who wanted me to ask the question of why the government is going about it the way it is. He wrote:

This bill would water down the definition of "danger" in Part II of the Canada Labour Code to the point it will become the weakest law in the country regulating the right of workers to refuse dangerous work without reprisals from their employers. It will lead to more workplace deaths and injuries in federally regulated industries.

My question to my colleague is this. People are very concerned, especially workers who are being forced to work in dangerous places. Can the member comment on that?

Ms. Jean Crowder: Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question. The member and I are both from British Columbia, and although they were not federally regulated industries, we saw a spike in deaths a few years back in the logging sector. There was some attention brought to bear, and through working with the workers, WorkSafeBC, and the employers, there were some changes made.

What we see here is a regressive step. What we should be doing with federally regulated employment is strengthening workplace safety to ensure that workers have the supports in place that ensure they can go to work and go home safely. It is also a benefit to employers. There are all kinds of things that happen in a workplace when there is an accident.

This is a very unfortunate move on the government's part. The government claims to stand up for working families, but it is hard to believe that statement when it does these things that do not protect the workers and do not protect the workplace.

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do appreciate the opportunity to speak to Bill C-4. It is a real privilege for me, not only to speak to it but also to tell my colleagues on the other side that there is good news within this piece of legislation. It is good news on a number of fronts. It is good news for Canadian families. It is good news for Canadian workers.

We have a lot of naysayers on the other side of the House, people who criticize the work that our government has done. There have been a lot of folks saying that more should be done. It is interesting. They want to see a smaller bill. Then they want to include a whole number of additional measures within the bill. It is always a contradiction when we are dealing with the other side.

We listen to the complaints from the other side, but there are some folks who have some expertise when it comes to finance and when it comes to world finance. I think it is important that we listen to them.

We know that there are organizations, such as the OECD and the IMF, that have passed judgment on our government's work and on the efforts that we have undertaken to protect Canada's economy. They have, again and again, praised, not only our government's initiatives, but our finance minister, who has brought forward these initiatives.

We know that there are folks around the world who are watching what Canada is doing and who are seeking to replicate it in their countries, as well.

We are seeing significant benefits as a Canadian population, things that are hitting home in communities across this country. When we look at what has resulted from the work that our government has done following the great recession, we know that there are over a million net new jobs that have been created as a result of the efforts of our government. Specifically, within that million jobs that have been created, over 90% of them are full-time jobs and 80% of those are in the private sector. Therefore, our government's initiatives to bring forward changes have freed up business to create jobs, to create opportunity.

We often talk about these big numbers that often just flow off our tongues but do not really have an impact, I do not think. However, every job is meaningful because it impacts the person who has that job.

Most important, at this Christmas time, we know that many of these jobs that have been created impact families. Families, of course, are one of the most important building blocks of our communities. Having a job makes a world of difference, especially as we approach this Christmas time. To know that our employment rate keeps rising, that the unemployment rate keeps dropping, that more and more families have the necessary means to get what they need to have in order to support their families is great news. It is something that I wish the opposition would spend more time recognizing and spend more time giving credit for. Because I think that we, as parliamentarians, need to be concerned, first and foremost, about ensuring that families have jobs to ensure that families are supported in those mechanisms. This bill would go a great distance to continue that great effort.

I think it is important to reflect on the past. I think it is important to recognize that Canada's track record, when it comes to the economy and making these changes, did not just start yesterday. Many of these changes and these initiatives we have undertaken started nearly eight years ago when our government first got into office. We started to prepare for the possibility of a rainy day.

In the first number of years of our government, we paid off \$37 billion of debt. That was surplus. We recognized it was important to reduce the debt of our country, so we paid off \$37 billion of the Canadian debt. Any family knows that in order to prepare for a rainy day, if money comes in from a windfall or from any mechanism, the most important thing to do is to pay off any debt. That is exactly what Canada did.

As a result, Canada was praised during the great recession. First, we were prepared for the possibility of that, better prepared than any other of the G8 countries. We also saw that Canada was able, then, to put money into the economy. We were able to support initiatives across this country to help reduce the impact of the global economic recession.

Government Orders

● (1730)

Obviously it was something that was beyond the borders of this country that caused the great recession, but people across this country were feeling the impact of the recession. Therefore, to immediately start flowing out money in an initiative to support local communities and job creation was absolutely essential.

It is important to note that in 2012, the great recession had come and many governments had put a lot of money into their economies to support initiatives to lessen the impact of the recession. Canada had a debt-to-GDP ratio of 34.6%. That was the lowest in the G7 and the second lowest was Germany. It had 57.2%, so a significantly higher debt-to-GDP ratio.

To give some scope of what this meant in terms of our fellow members of the G7, the average debt-to-GDP ratio within the G7 was 90.4%. If members compare 90.4% to Canada's 34.6%, they will recognize, as all Canadians have recognized, that Canada was in a better spot than most other countries. However, Canada has continued to lead, because we will be the first within the G7 to move from a country that continues to run deficits to being a deficit-free country.

Our Minister of Finance has continued to lead and ensure that Canada reaches that point of being deficit-free in the coming months. No other country can boast that. No other country can boast the debt-to-GDP ratio. However, we are not going to sit here and boast. We are going to continue to do the work that is necessary to ensure that we never fall back, that we never fall behind.

We hear many calls from the opposition benches to engage in risky spending schemes. They say it is just a billion here or several billion there. The NDP had plans to bring forward a \$20 billion carbon tax and we know that the Liberals have all kinds of interesting plans, including their efforts to raise the GST. We know on this side that it is important for a government to remain constrained to the dollars that come in, not simply to drag in more money from Canadians.

We believe it is important to continue to support families. It is important that families are not taxed to death. As a matter of fact, as a father of three young kids, I had an interesting conversation the other day. My daughter, who is seven years old, told me she does not think Santa Claus is real. She thinks that Santa Claus is her mother and I. It was awkward but I told her that mom and dad help out Santa Claus.

Families across this country are finding it easier to help out Santa Claus because the average family of four is getting \$3,200 back that they were not getting eight years ago. As families prepare for Christmas, they recognize that our government has put over \$3,200 back into their pockets so that they can support their families and can continue to help out Santa Claus at this time of the year.

The budget bill is our effort to continue to have an environment in Canada where we have opportunity, hope, prosperity and jobs for all Canadians. More importantly, when it comes down to the family level, it means more prosperity and more ability for families to support those who are most important in their lives, such as their kids, and to contribute to the local communities we live in.

● (1735)

I think it is important at this time of giving for the opposition to recognize that the bill is an important step forward to ensure not only that Canadians have jobs, but what that means at the family level as well.

BILL C-4—NOTICE OF TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I must advise that agreement has not been reached under the provisions of Standing Order 78(1) and 78(2) concerning the proceedings at report stage and third reading of Bill C-4, a second act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 21, 2013 and other measures.

Under the provisions of Standing Order 78(3), I give notice that a minister of the Crown will propose at the next sitting a motion to allot a specific number of days or hours for the consideration and disposal of proceedings at those stages.

● (1740)

REPORT STAGE

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-4, A second act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 21, 2013 and other measures, as reported (without amendment) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member talked about how the Conservatives are putting money into families. He talked about his three children. I have two children, too.

The Conservatives' record speaks for itself. They have accumulated over \$100 billion in debt that my kids and his kids will have to pay. That is their record.

My question to the member is this. Who will pay for the mismanagement of the Conservatives that has taken place over the last six years?

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Mr. Speaker, it is important that we recognize what the Liberal and the NDP plans are in contrast to what the Conservative plan is.

I have been here for the last nearly eight years. There has never been an initiative brought forward by the opposition benches that would reduce taxes or that would work to pay down debt. We have seen consistently, time and time again, that any time our government has engaged in any spending plan, the opposition benches call for those spending plans to be more robust. They want to spend more. They want to take out more debt, and they want to ensure that future generations are saddled with that debt.

Our government has put into each family, the average family of four, \$3,200 per year in tax savings. This is important. This is real money. The opposition has voted against every single initiative that would see dollars go back into the hands of families. That is unfortunate.

The opposition has also called for higher debt and more debt for future generations. I will stand on this side of the House and defend our initiatives to reduce debt so that future generations do not have to pay for the decisions and the desires of the other side.

Government Orders

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is a bit much, saying not more debt when the government inherited a billion dollar surplus and turned it into a billion dollar deficit, on an annual basis. I take exception to that. The hon. member talked about jobs and he talked about plans, but then there is reality.

There was an interesting story in the *Hill Times* last week. A comparison was done. This is a reality check for the member. It is 93 months since the Conservative government has been in office. The number of Canadians with full-time jobs increased roughly 8.9%. That is 93 months. Compare that to the Paul Martin-Jean Chrétien governments, in the 93 months prior to 2006, full-time jobs increased by 17.1% overall. The reality speaks for itself.

My question related to the budget is this. Why do the Conservatives have to sneak so much other legislation into the budget legislation in order to get their legislative agenda passed? Why not give it the respect it is entitled to and introduce separate pieces of legislation on the very important issues that are being presented in this particular budget?

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government, the Martin government, was well known for not getting anything done. Our government recognizes that Canadians want stuff done, so it brings forward initiatives like those found in the bill.

My colleague from the Liberal Party claims they created more jobs. He references the *Hill Times*. I will reference organizations like the OECD and the IMF. Those are somewhat more legitimate on economic issues. They have praised Canada consistently. What Canada has done following the greatest recession outside of the Great Depression is remarkable in comparison to any other G8 country.

If my hon. colleague has any advice when it comes to reducing taxes for Canadian families or reducing the debt, I would like to hear it, because that would be the first time we have heard any advice on those two measures from a member of the Liberal Party.

• (1745)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure that I rise today to speak to this bill. Ultimately, I am disappointed. Just before we had the questions and answers, we had the government House leader stand in his place and once again bring in this tradition of time allocation and preventing debate in the House of Commons, which I would attribute to the Conservative reform majority government mentality.

It is somewhat disappointing that the government only sees one way to pass through its legislation, and that is through time constraints. There has been an assault on democracy by the majority Conservative government like no other in the history of our nation.

What we are debating today is Bill C-4, which deals with a wide variety of other pieces of legislation that have very little to do with the budget. We are talking about changes to the Supreme Court. We are talking about changes to the Labour Code. We are talking about changes to immigration. We could argue that all of these should be stand-alone pieces of legislation. We should be highlighting this aspect of the debate today on Bill C-4.

In the last three budgets and budget supplementary documents that we have seen, the bills we have been presented with have been

massive pieces of legislation. The government has used the budget to try to get past numerous other aspects of law that should have been stand-alone pieces of legislation. The Conservatives know that.

I have a quote. It is from someone who would have been the leader of the Reform Party at the time, and now he is the Prime Minister of Canada. How quickly things have changed. I will quote what he said in the days when he was in the opposition. He said:

We can agree with some of the measures but oppose others. How do we express our views and the views of our constituents when the matters are so diverse? Dividing the bill into several components would allow members to represent views of their constituents on each of the different components in the bill.

That is a direct quote. He asked the government members in particular to worry about the implications of the omnibus bills for democracy and the functionality of Parliament.

That bill was but 100 pages. It was nowhere near as profoundly huge as the three budget bills that the Conservative government has brought forward. The arguments that the then-Reform Party leader was using back then apply today. The government chooses to continue on.

I have heard other members talk about “the tradition of the House”. This is no tradition of the House. If anything, full credit goes to the PMO. Is this the only way that the PMO feels it can pass legislation?

When we talk about other forms of bills that the ministers are allowed to introduce in a proper fashion, what do we see? Time allocation. The Conservative government has brought in over 50 motions of time allocation. What does that mean? It means that there have been 25 hours of House business just on bell ringing alone, not to mention the half hour debates and questions and answers that precede the votes themselves, and the voting time that follows. Imagine the hours and hours that have been wasted because of the Conservative government's determination that the only way to pass legislation here is to bring in time allocation.

The Conservatives have failed, and they have failed miserably, in that the government House leader is unable to sit down with opposition House leaders and come up with agreements on how and when bills, whether they are budget bills or not, should be passed.

I have been a parliamentarian for over 20 years. I have sat down with government opposition leaders, albeit at a different level, and with government House leaders and opposition House leaders in the past, and I have seen the way it should work.

• (1750)

This Conservative majority has demonstrated no willingness to make that happen. Today we are talking about a budget bill. The Conservatives are giving their standard lines. They get the gold star. The PM's office must have someone who is assigned the responsibility of handing out the gold stars every time members go to those speaking lines, that spin, about jobs and prosperity.

Government Orders

Let us remember those commercials and the tens of millions, if not hundreds of millions, of tax dollars spent to promote the government's bills. At the end of the day, Conservatives can be critical of *The Hill Times* or the stories that show the reality that the government has not done as well as it proclaims it has in regard to job creation.

How many times have we heard the government say that it is going to have surplus budgets? Reality is quite different. The Conservatives took a surplus budget, and this was before the recession kicked in, and they squandered that surplus budget. They turned it into a deficit budget. It did not take them long. They do not have a history of getting Canada's books out of budget situations. In fact, it is quite the opposite. When has there been a Conservative prime minister who was actually able to take a deficit and turn it into a surplus?

Members talk about social programs and say that it was the Conservatives who brought in the social programs. Whether it is Canada's pension program, the OAS, or the guaranteed supplement programs, those are all Liberal creations. They are the ones who brought them forward. Whether it is health care or unemployment insurance, it was the Liberal Party of Canada that brought them forward. We recognized the value of social programs, even if it meant working with other levels of government, which is something the current government is not very good at.

There were even constitutional issues that had to be overcome to bring in employment insurance programs. It was not easy. However, we will find that there are a number of programs today because of the way Liberal governments in the past ensured that the values Canadians hold so dearly were acted upon.

We are concerned about the state of finances. The member talks about tax breaks. The Liberal Party of Canada has been arguing for tax breaks. I do not know where the member is coming from. There have been over one thousand tariff increases. It has been the Liberal Party, day in and day out, talking about those tariffs and some of the taxes put on Canadians.

What about small businesses? Small businesses are the ones generating the economic activity that is creating employment in Canada. The best social program is a job. We should be doing more. We are glad, to a certain degree, that the Conservatives have taken us up on some of the small business tax breaks we have suggested. However, they were Liberal ideas.

When the members stand to speak to Bill C-4, they are limited. The government House leader has indicated that tomorrow we can anticipate whether we are going to get another hour of debate to complement the few hours we have already had, even though we have 308 members of Parliament. However, there is a huge bill before us, and it is not possible to address all the different issues in the bill. That is the reason I find it so difficult to even consider. We have to take it in its entirety when it comes to voting on the bill.

• (1755)

This bill is an assault on democracy. It does not do what it could do in terms of economic activity, in terms of addressing the middle class.

It is going to be the Liberal Party of Canada going forward that is going to be there for the middle class. We believe, at the end of the day, that we need to make a difference and provide hope. That is something we are prepared to do well into the future.

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this member was gracious enough to stand up and ask me a question when I gave a speech earlier in the House, so I want to return the favour.

The member talks about the Conservatives squandering a surplus. This is Liberal revisionism. I want to ask the member a question. We paid down \$37 billion—let me repeat that number: \$37 billion—on our national debt from 2006, 2007 and 2008.

By what definition could this member possibly suggest that paying down \$37 billion, to the lowest level of national debt in 25 years in the pre-recession period, is squandering a surplus?

Furthermore, I would like to know if the member would have balanced the budget, which will be balanced very soon, in fact by 2015, by slashing transfers to the provinces?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, again, all we have to do is look at the books of the Minister of Finance. It is very clear that when the Conservatives inherited the Liberal Party's books, Paul Martin's finances, there was actually a surplus.

Well before the recession hit, we were in a deficit situation. That is in fact the reality. Even the government's financial documents will clearly show that. The member seems to be in denial on the issue, but that is in fact the reality.

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I find it a bit rich that the Liberal member talks about the fact that they represent and fight for the middle-income families. This was a government that basically put in place the 2% funding cap on first nations education. We saw the demise of a lot of funds under the EI program.

How could he as a member of Parliament answer that? Did the government actually do that? Did it impose a 2% funding cap? Did the government actually take away a lot of the funding in the EI program? Did it, in turn, put through omnibus budget bills?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I note that the member is what we call cherry-picking certain issues. I could respond by doing likewise. I have been accused of doing a bit of cherry-picking myself at times. I acknowledge that.

I can say that it was the New Democratic Party and the Conservative Party that killed the Kelowna accord. That would have done more for the first nations than any other negotiated agreement. It was the NDP deciding to get rid of the Liberals and voting with the Conservatives.

What about child care? How many people of the middle class would have benefited from an enhanced child care program, something that was there and was being put into place? Again, the New Democrats voted against that in support of the Conservatives.

Government Orders

Even when we come up with good solid social programs, quite often what we find is that the New Democrats, for some bizarre reason, do not like to support good, solid social Liberal ideas and will vote with the Conservative Party. It is somewhat mind-boggling when I see that.

I would ask that particular member, when she gets the opportunity, to maybe address those two major shortcomings of her party.

• (1800)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the member could speak to the fact that we now have what appears to be a new practice that did not exist under previous administrations, being two omnibus budget bills a year.

That is what happened in 2012, with Bill C-38 and Bill C-45, and that is what is happening this year with Bill C-60 and Bill C-4. It means that every single budget is followed by an omnibus bill, which in the last two years has comprised 800 to 900 pages each time, of multiple separate acts. The Canadian Bar Association made the point on Bill C-4 that this reduces the ability to have proper hearings and scrutiny on each of the component parts of the legislation, and it violates parliamentary practice.

I wonder if my colleague from Winnipeg North would agree.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I would concur with the member's comment and maybe add to it.

We need to recognize that had this been a stand-alone bill, it would have come into the House, there would have been a second reading for good debate, there would have been a standing committee to allow stakeholders and Canadians to contribute, there would have been a third reading debate and then there would have been votes wrapped all over that.

We are talking well over 100 pieces of legislation combined. That is a four year legislative agenda in many ways that has been lost because of the government using these budget omnibus bills.

Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today on behalf of the constituents of Fleetwood—Port Kells to participate in the debate on Bill C-4, the economic action plan 2013 act no. 2.

The proposed act will implement key measures from economic action plan 2013 as well as certain previously announced tax measures to help create jobs, stimulate economic growth and secure Canada's long-term prosperity.

Our government remains focused on the number one priority of my constituents and of people right across Canada, which is jobs. The measures contained in Bill C-4 reflect that priority and include support for job creators such as: extending and expanding the hiring credit for small businesses, which would benefit an estimated 560,000 employers; freezing employment insurance premium rates for three years, leaving \$660 million in the pockets of jobs creators and workers in 2014 alone; increasing the lifetime capital gains exemption to \$800,000 and indexing the new limit to inflation; expanding the accelerated capital cost allowance for clean energy generation equipment to include a broader range of biogas production equipment and equipment used to treat gases for waste; measures to close tax loopholes and combat tax evasion; modernizing the Canada student loans program by moving to electronic

service delivery; improving the efficiency of the temporary foreign worker program by expanding electronic service delivery; and phasing out the labour-sponsored venture capital corporations tax credit.

As our government has made clear, while Canada leads the G7 with more than one million jobs created since the depth of the global economic recession, we are not immune from the challenges beyond our borders. We cannot afford to become complacent.

By implementing the measures from economic action plan 2013, our government is helping to create jobs and opportunities for Canadians and grow Canada's economy.

Canada's economic action plan 2013 demonstrates our government's continued strong support for British Columbia through record federal transfer support for hospitals, schools and other critical services. Totalling over \$5.9 billion in 2013-14, this transfer support represents an increase of nearly \$2 billion since the former federal Liberal government.

Already there has been unprecedented federal investment in B.C.'s Lower Mainland, in Surrey and into British Columbia communities under this Conservative government impacting nearly every aspect of the lives of hard-working families.

We are making a real difference in the everyday lives of Surrey residents. In total, our government has spent over \$1.56 billion on local projects since 2006. This includes the new RCMP headquarters, the South Fraser Perimeter Road and the new Surrey Library, among others.

I have personally made dozens of federal funding announcements totalling over \$40 million. Some are the result of the economic action plan, while others are through the Pacific gateway project of the building Canada fund.

Regardless of where the money comes from, it is resulting in local jobs, local opportunities and local facilities for my constituents and Surrey residents. It is all about helping hard-working families, helping the unemployed, seniors and youth in our communities.

In recent months, I have had the pleasure of delivering over \$250,000 for the Surrey YMCA, over \$110,000 for the Surrey Sport and Leisure Complex, nearly \$180,000 for the Newton Wave Pool, over \$200,000 to improve water quality at four Surrey community facilities, \$350,000 to aid Sophie's Place and protect child victims of crime and nearly \$400,000 for 42 projects to allow for the summer employment of students.

• (1805)

It is all about improving our communities, creating jobs, and stimulating the economy. Bill C-4 contains measures that would not only create jobs but would also keep government spending in check so that we can return the budget to balance.

Government Orders

Budget 2013 has our government on track to balance the budget, on schedule, in 2015-16. From 2006 to 2008, our government paid down almost \$37 billion in debt, bringing Canada's federal debt-to-GDP ratio to its lowest level in nearly 30 years. This placed Canada in a very strong position to weather the global recession. When the recession hit, we made a deliberate decision to run temporary deficits to protect the Canadian economy, and that plan worked, with over one million net new jobs created since July 2009.

At the same time, we committed to return to balanced budgets over the medium term. We ended temporary stimulus as planned. We controlled government spending. We eliminated wasteful and inefficient spending.

Budget 2013 announces further saving measures that will total \$2 billion by 2015-16, including examining spending to ensure that government operations are managed efficiently, reducing travel costs, standardizing government information technology, closing tax loopholes, and improving the Canada Revenue Agency's compliance program to reduce tax evasion.

Canada's fiscal position remains the envy of the G7. Economic action plan 2013 reinforces our position and ensures that our economy is ready to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

As recently confirmed in the government's annual financial report, we are right on track to return to budget surplus. That is good news. In fact, the deficit last year fell to \$18.9 billion, down by more than one-quarter from the deficit in 2011-12 and down by nearly two-thirds from 2009-10.

Our government is acting prudently and decisively to ensure that Canada's economy creates good jobs and sustains a high quality of life for Canadian families. With economic action plan 2013, our government remains squarely focused on the number one priority of Canadians, with a forward-looking plan to create jobs and to grow the economy in British Columbia and across Canada.

Under our plan, Canada will also return to balanced budgets in 2015, and federal taxes will remain at the lowest level in 50 years.

Budget 2013 builds on our government's solid record of achievement, a record that includes unprecedented funding for Surrey infrastructure, lowering taxes over 160 times, and lowering the average family's tax bill by over \$3,220. It is a good budget for Canada. It is a good budget for British Columbia, for Surrey, and, of course, for my riding of Fleetwood—Port Kells.

• (1810)

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have seen in the last number of years an increase in seniors' poverty in Canada. We saw in the report from the OECD just last week that seniors' poverty under the current government has actually gone up.

I would like her comments on how she sees this budget helping seniors when there are cuts to programs to help seniors, and veterans in particular, and when the forecast is to increase the age of eligibility for OAS.

Finally, most seniors are finding it really difficult to get the basics met, in particular with the cost of medicine. There is nothing in this bill on helping with the cost of everyday life for seniors for things like health care. I would ask her to comment on that, the OECD

report, the fact that seniors are being squeezed, and the fact that the government is looking at increasing eligibility for OAS.

Mrs. Nina Grewal: Mr. Speaker, I would let the member know that our government does understand the importance of seniors' needs. That being said, our government also understands the importance of a strong economy and balancing the budget, and the Conservative government has always worked hard to grow the economy and support and create jobs to help Canadians across the country prosper with the help of our economic action plan. Canada has emerged out of the global economic recession with one of the strongest economies and the highest job-creation record among the G7 countries. That is something to be very proud of, and I am proud to be part of this government.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member made reference to the economic action plan on a couple of occasions, which is great. I am sure the PMO will be glad to hear that.

The question I have is in regard to the labour standards that are being proposed to be changed. Does the member have any thoughts that she would like to share with the House on that aspect of the bill?

Mrs. Nina Grewal: Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to ensuring the health and safety of Canadian workers and of course employers. This includes Canadian health and safety regulations that are both supportive and very clear so that workers and employers do not abuse them.

Over the last 10 years, more than 80% of refusals to work have been determined to be situations of no danger, even after appeals. By clarifying the definition of "danger" with the amendment to the Canadian Labour Code in Bill C-4, workers and of course employers would be better able to deal with health and safety issues under the internal responsibility system.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I agree with my hon. colleague from Fleetwood—Port Kells that there are many measures in this budget that I would want to support: things that go after tax cheaters, technical amendments, changes to the lifetime capital gains. There are things there that actually relate to budgets and could be voted on.

Would the member not agree that it would have been preferable for the House to have those parts that are not related to the budget, such as changes to the Canada Labour Code health and safety provisions and changes to the Immigration Act, dealt with properly and separately so that we could assess them on their own merit after proper review and study?

Government Orders

•(1815)

Mrs. Nina Grewal: Mr. Speaker, I think the member was not paying much attention to the speech that I delivered earlier or she would not be asking that question.

Our government is on the right track. Since 2006 our Conservative government has worked hard to ensure that taxpayer money is used very effectively and efficiently. Due to our fiscal responsibility and debt-reduction measures, our government is on its way to balancing the budget in 2015.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by saying that I am pleased to rise and speak on behalf of my constituents.

What is less pleasant is the fact that in just two and a half years, this is the third time I have spoken to an omnibus bill. It has been a different bill each time, unfortunately. I think this situation illustrates the recurring problem that keeps resurfacing with this government.

It is also difficult, as the hon. member for Winnipeg Centre said earlier this afternoon, to choose a topic to discuss. I will try my best because my constituents have concerns about many of the provisions in the bill.

The first, and the most interesting, is the issue of Supreme Court justices. Of all the things that have nothing to do with a budget implementation bill, I think that the easiest one to focus on is the proposed changes to the process for selecting Supreme Court justices.

It is even more problematic in this case because it seems to be a response to a process that the government bungled from the outset. We saw how difficult this process was, particularly after Justice Nadon appeared before the committee. Then we have the Minister of Justice saying that he wants to propose these changes.

I think that it is important to take this opportunity to point out that the hon. member for Gatineau sought the unanimous consent of the House—which was obviously refused—to move a motion outlining the federal government's legal and constitutional requirements regarding the selection of Supreme Court judges and, in this case in particular, justices from Quebec. The process must be followed and the criteria must be met, but it does not seem that that was the case.

Not only did the Conservatives fail to abide by these criteria, but now they are proposing changes to them. What is more, the Conservatives decided to include these changes in a budget implementation bill, which is completely ridiculous and absurd.

All of the points I just made show a blatant lack of respect for Quebecers, particularly the people in my riding. This is something that we strongly disagree with. It is one of the main problems with the bill. It is an issue that many of my constituents have raised since Bill C-4 was introduced in this House.

Another problem that affects Quebec in particular, since it is something unique to Quebec, is the labour-sponsored funds and the elimination of the labour-sponsored funds tax credit. The Con-

servatives plan to do away with the tax credit in this budget implementation bill.

Let me be clear. Although these funds are called workers' funds, they are an important economic driver not just for workers but also for businesses and the community.

I would like to speak about a very relevant example in my riding of Chambly—Borduas. This summer, as usual, I attended the launch of entrepreneurial projects by young people from the *Maison des jeunes des quatre fenêtres* youth centre in Mont-Saint-Hilaire.

Throughout the summer, these young people start and run a business. They sign contracts, manage budgets and look for work within the community, whether it be mowing lawns, working in seniors' residences or painting fences. These young people do all sorts of work for the community and clearly all of that costs money.

I was intrigued—if that is the right term—to see labour-sponsored funds listed as sponsors. I told the chair of the youth centre's board of directors that this was a good example of how labour-sponsored funds give back to our communities and to Quebec society.

This is another example that shows that the Conservative government is not taking into account Quebec realities and does not understand how important these measures are to Quebec communities.

•(1820)

They make a positive and important contribution.

We must therefore condemn this budget measure and the budget implementation bill. That is very important for Quebecers. We sent postcards to the people in my riding inviting them to comment on and express their opposition to this measure. We received hundreds of responses, maybe even a thousand. In the last budget bill, people also opposed the botched EI reform. Again, the people of Quebec protested to express their opposition to this measure. This is a misguided measure that has been imposed on Quebecers. Obviously, Quebec is not the only province that has been harmed, but I am focusing first and foremost on my community, which was also affected.

There are many other measures, but we also have to address the question of process. A number of my colleagues have also raised this issue. I spoke about the procedure for appointing judges to the Supreme Court. This shows how this bill includes everything but the kitchen sink. The same thing happened with Bill C-38 and the omnibus bill introduced last fall. All these elements are extremely problematic. Instead of having a healthy debate and addressing all the items in the bill, we can only speak for 10 minutes—20 minutes, if we are lucky. We can debate the bill at the second reading and third reading stages. Obviously, there is also an issue with the committees. The time available for committees to study bills has been severely restricted. We are starting to get used to this, although we certainly do not want to. The members' speaking time is rather limited, which makes it rather difficult to address every item.

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I would like to talk about something else along the same lines. In fact, I am running out of time—which illustrates my point—and that is exactly what we take issue with. Before I run out of time, I would like to criticize the changes made to the Canada Labour Code. It is absolutely unacceptable that the government is making changes to the working conditions of so many people, including in the public sector, through a budget implementation bill. This is an unhealthy way to operate, and workers have been critical of this approach. Last week, I met with several young people from the Canadian Labour Congress who were representing a number of different labour bodies. Those young representatives commented on the measures. The omnibus nature of the bill limits our ability in committee to hear testimony from people like these young representatives. It is tough for legislators. Unfortunately, things do not change. The members across the way say they want to focus on the economy, but when we read the bill, it is clear that it is not just about the economy. In fact, there is little mention of the economy. The bill is mainly about changing the foundation of our social systems. I think it is important to speak out against this. Unfortunately, since the beginning of the debate, the government has been turning a deaf ear.

In closing, I would like to say that even when it comes to the economy, the government clearly lacks judgment. It is making cuts and reducing services. The Parliamentary Budget Officer says that even though the government is cutting services, including services to Canadians, it is still spending just as much money. I think that says it all when it comes to how this government is managing the economy. Instead of talking about the economy, the government has chosen to talk about other things.

Unfortunately, we will not be supporting Bill C-4.

• (1825)

Ms. Paulina Ayala (Honoré-Mercier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, why does my colleague think the government uses omnibus bills? It puts everything in a budget implementation bill and, in the end, it becomes a bill about unions, safety, and so on.

I would like to hear my colleague's opinion. I feel as though this bill is really discordant. Some of its elements are acceptable, while others are not.

What the Conservatives are proposing here is discordant and confusing. In short, they are not allowing any real debate, and this is an affront to democracy.

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

That is what I have been trying to say, eloquently or not. This is the third time I have spoken out against this method, so it is becoming harder to find ways to say the same thing without repeating myself.

As my colleague mentioned, this bill contains all kinds of things that have nothing to do with the budget. This seems to be a way for some Conservative ministers to find solutions to problems without truly addressing the challenges.

For example, the Minister of Justice wants to make changes to how Supreme Court justices from Quebec are appointed. Instead of addressing the issue properly and fixing a botched process, the government chose to hide it in an omnibus bill.

We are seeing the same sort of thing from the President of the Treasury Board. He lacks respect for public sector workers. So many negotiations were not conducted in good faith. For example, the negotiations with the diplomats were very difficult.

Even though there are problems with the process, rather than sitting down with these people, having a serious conversation and proposing solutions in a bill, the government is trying to hide these measures in an omnibus bill. That is the problem with this process, and the NDP opposes this way of doing things.

[*English*]

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I read into the record earlier the fact that Transport Canada, under the infrastructure program, had lapsed \$1.1 billion. What we know in this particular budget is that it is not dealing with the fact that there are infrastructure deficits from coast to coast to coast, whether they are bridges, drinking water, sewage treatment plans or roads.

I wonder if the member could comment on the fact that this omnibus budget bill simply does not deal with the realities that face Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

That is exactly the problem. Earlier, I heard a Conservative member talk about the FCN delegates who were on Parliament Hill last week. Those people said that the Conservatives are taking steps in the right direction, but that there is still a lot of work to be done.

I have a good relationship with municipal officials in my riding. They have criticized the lack of infrastructure funding for their towns, and also for the entire region, on many occasions.

Just look at the Champlain Bridge. Today the Minister of Infrastructure patted himself on the back for cutting three years off the construction time. What took him so long to get to that point? Why are we facing this crisis?

This government, which calls itself a good manager, has shown no leadership and is a poor manager. Trying to hide all these things in an omnibus bill just makes the situation worse and prevents us from properly debating the issues.

Nevertheless, we will continue to raise these issues, as did my colleague to some extent, because this is unacceptable. The Champlain Bridge situation is completely unacceptable to my constituents.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

Adjournment Proceedings

• (1830)

[English]

HOUSING

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on November 27, I asked the minister for social development about the government's plan to address the affordable housing crisis that exists in this country. Her answer shows that the government just does not understand the depth of the problem. It is a crisis that is causing the city of Toronto to bring people to Ottawa to rally and to ask the federal government to stop the cutting. It is amazing to see a city send people here. It is one thing to have social groups, but a city sending people here to rally is quite an amazing feat.

As the Conservatives allow the long-term housing agreements to expire, up to \$1.7 billion in annual funding for housing will be lost. Low-income Canadians will bear the brunt of these cuts. They will no longer be able to afford to pay their rents when their rent-geared-to-income programs end.

I asked why the government is allowing the funding for housing to expire. What I received in reply was a litany of what exists today in helping people who are in housing need. There are 800,000 families and individuals currently being supported in part by federal funds, the result not of the government's action but the actions of previous governments, including the deal cut between Jack Layton and Paul Martin in 2005. The current government voted against it, and I heard nothing about the government's plans to help those in housing need.

The government has been cutting and plans to cut even more from its contribution to housing. The federal contribution to affordable housing was \$3.6 billion in 2010. It has fallen to about \$2 billion today, and it will fall further, to \$1.8 billion by 2016. This is a 52% cut over six years, at a time when the need for affordable housing continues to increase. Further, the number of households served by federal funding to make their rents affordable will also decline, from 800,000 today, to 525,000 by 2016.

The minister also in her answer suggested that job creation would somehow solve the problem. It again shows how out of touch the government is. Many of those receiving assistance already have jobs, but the cost of housing strips many of their ability to pay for their rent. The government is making it worse by forcing people to accept less when coming off EI.

The need for affordable housing for low-income families in this country, which is already great, is growing. Housing need is defined as having to pay more than 30% of one's gross income on shelter.

In my riding of York South—Weston, there are nearly 16,000 households in housing need today. That is over one-third of the households in my riding.

If government members had passed Bill C-400, presented by the NDP, it would have forced the government to begin creating a strategy to deal with this crisis in collaboration with provinces and municipal governments. When it killed the idea of a strategy, it said that to fully correct the problem would cost \$6.2 billion. It is good that it has identified the scope of the problem. That is based on the 1.4 million households needing help and that the help needed is an average of \$4,779 per year per household. The government is good

at pointing its finger at the problem but refuses to lift that finger to help.

When housing costs eat up so much family income, there is little left to pay for health needs, for the needs of children, or to save for the future. There is little left for food. It is no wonder that food bank use is so high in this country.

My question remains: With housing costs at an all-time high, why is the government allowing the funding for housing to expire?

• (1835)

Mr. Scott Armstrong (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment and Social Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for York South—Weston for, once again, bringing the issue of affordable housing before the House.

I am pleased to reiterate our government's commitment that Canadians in all parts of the country have access to safe, suitable and affordable housing. That commitment has been backed up by more than \$15 billion in federal investment in housing and homelessness since 2006.

First, I would refer the hon. member to the 2012 annual report of Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation for the most up-to-date information on federal social housing investments. The Government of Canada provides \$1.7 billion a year in funding in support of almost 594,000 households living in existing social housing, on and off reserve. Provinces and territories also contribute annually to this housing.

This funding is provided under long-term agreements, covering a 25- to 50-year period, with housing groups that provide affordable housing to those in need. Contrary to what the opposition continues to say, there is absolutely no cut. At the end of these agreements, the government will have fulfilled its commitment and the funding will end.

At the same time, the mortgages on the properties would generally be paid off, allowing most housing groups to continue to provide affordable housing and to be free to operate their projects as they see fit. Collectively, housing groups will find themselves with billions of dollars in real estate assets, which they can use to best meet the needs and priorities of their communities.

I would remind the member opposite that this was a decision made by the previous Liberal government. It has always been the plan that once these long-term agreements came to an end, so too would the subsidy.

Adjournment Proceedings

For those housing groups that need additional assistance, the federal government is providing significant funding under the investment in affordable housing. Funding is provided through provinces and territories, which have the flexibility to use the federal funding to design and deliver programs that meet local needs and priorities, including rent supplement programs that can be made available to housing providers once their existing operating agreements mature.

Further to this, just last month, my colleague, the hon. Minister of State for Social Development, announced new common-sense changes that would allow providers to keep any federal money they have left over in their subsidy surplus funds. Until now, these funds needed to be returned to the government once these operating agreements matured.

In fact, Nicholas Gazzard, the head of the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada, said that the CHF “warmly welcomed” the announcement and that co-ops can use federal funds to provide assistance even after their agreements have expired.

That is not all. Economic action plan 2013 renewed the investment in affordable housing with a \$1.25 billion announcement of funding over five years, which provided \$100 million over two years for new affordable housing in Nunavut. The funding will be implemented through amendments to existing agreements with provinces and territories with an effective date of April 1, 2014, ensuring continuity and delivery of programs.

Meanwhile, current federal funding for affordable housing continues to flow under the existing arrangements until March 31, 2014, leaving no gap between these announcements.

In addition to the \$1.7 billion provided annually to support the existing social housing stock, the stimulus phase of Canada's economic action plan included an investment of more than \$2 billion over two years to build new and renovate existing social housing. This funding has resulted in more than 16,500 housing construction projects and renovation projects across Canada, improving the living conditions for tens of thousands of Canadian families, while creating jobs and stimulating local economies.

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's comments. However, they confirm my worst fears, that in fact the current government intends to cut the \$1.7 billion it is now spending on affordable housing through the co-op agreements by simply allowing those agreements to expire without any replacement funding whatsoever.

In fact, the government will apparently determine that it will save \$1.7 billion, which would then go to provide a more balanced budget, which at the same time, would leave several hundred thousand Canadians without adequate, suitable or affordable housing.

The government suggested, in its opening statement, that it has a commitment to safe, suitable and affordable housing. Yet, when presented with Bill C-400, which would have in fact allowed the government to create a strategy with the provinces and territories to do just that, the government decided to vote against that motion and to kill any idea that the government would be involved in a strategy with the provinces, territories and municipalities.

In conclusion, it appears that the government has not yet answered the question about what will happen to those people whose residences would become unaffordable when these long-term agreements expire.

● (1840)

Mr. Scott Armstrong: Mr. Speaker, it bears repeating that our government has invested an estimated more than \$15 billion in housing and homelessness since 2006. These investments are improving the quality of life for low-income Canadians, individuals who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, low-income seniors, persons with disabilities, recent immigrants, and aboriginal people.

Annually, the government spends \$1.7 billion on existing social housing. The investment in affordable housing, which was renewed in economic action plan 2013, ensures that we will continue to invest in a range of affordable housing solutions in communities across Canada.

Rather than imposing a one-size-fits-all approach, we are giving the provinces and territories increased flexibility to design and deliver housing programs that address local needs and local circumstances. Our overarching goal is to continue to reduce the number of Canadians in housing need, which is something I am sure the hon. member for York South—Weston would support.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am rising this evening in adjournment proceedings to pursue a question I asked November 27 in the House. The question related to the issue of the climate crisis.

The Speaker and other members here may be familiar with my own activities. I participated in COP 19. This was the 19th Conference of the Parties under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. These meetings have been going on, as the name suggests, for 19 years of annual meetings to develop mechanisms to meet the commitments. All governments around the world, literally over 190 countries, are committed under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change to avoid levels of greenhouse gas buildup in the atmosphere. The term used in the convention is to avoid levels that become dangerous and to avoid human cause. The convention language is “anthropogenic climate change” at a level that becomes dangerous.

The scientific community was organized by United Nations agencies, such as the World Meteorological Organization, and UNEP, into the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, to advise policy-makers, because the term “dangerous” is one without an absolute definition. One could say it is dangerous now. It is certainly dangerous if one were in shantytowns in the Philippines when Typhoon Haiyan hit. It is certainly dangerous if one were on the east coast of the United States when Hurricane Sandy hit.

Adjournment Proceedings

We have seen dangerous individual accelerated events packing more power because of the warmer ocean waters, because of the strange weather patterns we are experiencing, with oscillations of the jet streams, which are becoming slower and more permanent. They are creating periods of extreme high pressure and low pressure sitting on parts of the world much longer than when we had the jet streams moving pretty quickly and moving at mid-latitudes in horizontal fashion.

We have seen significant, dangerous impacts. If one is in a low-lying island state, one might say it is dangerous now. The scientific community has advised, and the world community, including the Prime Minister, accepted the warning, that we must ensure that whatever else we do, we do not allow global average temperatures to increase 2° Celsius above where it was before the industrial revolution. In other words, that is before anthropogenic gases began to build up.

Two degrees may not sound like a lot, but it is well into the danger zone. If we do not avoid 2° Celsius, we are not talking about another political target that gets missed. We are talking about irrevocable changes, changes we will not be able to remedy down the road. Therefore, it is essential that we address the climate crisis and are meaningfully engaged as a country, which we are not right now.

My question for the Prime Minister, which he did not address at all, is whether he is prepared to accept the invitation of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, who, in the wake of Typhoon Haiyan, announced a special leaders summit to take place September 24, 2014, in the days ahead of the UN General Assembly, when many world leaders will be there anyway. This is to be a “solutions summit”, in the words of the Secretary-General.

World leaders are invited to show up and bring forward solutions and to create some political momentum, because we are coming to a new deadline. After the failure of the 2009 Copenhagen conference, the UN, through the Conference of the Parties, through all the nations involved in the process, including Canada, have accepted that by COP 21, in 2015, we will have a global binding treaty engaging all nations, developed and developing, and that treaty will be sufficient to avoid 2° Celsius.

We have a very serious disconnect between the pace of the negotiations and the pace of climate change in the atmosphere. We have very little time. I wish the Prime Minister had addressed my question. Perhaps the hon. member across could tell us if the Prime Minister of Canada will be attending the leaders' climate summit.

• (1845)

Mr. Scott Armstrong (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment and Social Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the comments from my fellow Nova Scotian across the way.

Canada remains committed to its climate change targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and our action and leadership demonstrate this. Canada's latest emissions trends report projects that as a result of existing measures and actions from all levels of government, consumers, and businesses, Canada's GHG emissions in 2020 will be 734 megatons.

This means we have reduced emissions by 128 megatons compared to where Canada's emissions were projected to be in 2020 if no measures were taken to reduce emissions since 2005.

Canada has continued to demonstrate leadership on the international stage as well. Representing less than 2% of the global emissions of greenhouse gases, Canada understands the importance for any international climate change agreement to include the participation of and action from all major emitters.

That is why, at COP 19 in Warsaw, we continued to push for such an agreement, and the outcome from Warsaw firmly solidified that position.

Canada's leadership was also instrumental in achieving a breakthrough in Warsaw on an important initiative to help developing countries reduce deforestation and forest degradation, which account for nearly 15% of global greenhouse gas emissions.

I would like to highlight that in addition to the negotiations at COP 19, Canada participated in important meetings, including the High Level Assembly of the Climate and Clean Air Coalition. Being a top donor for the coalition, Canada's contribution has been significant and is leading to practical actions being implemented to achieve near-term emissions reduction.

Canadians should also be proud to know that this leadership is being recognized on the world stage. In fact, while the minister was in Warsaw, she heard from a number of representatives from other countries who thanked and praised Canada for its environmental record. This record includes a systemic sector-by-sector regulatory approach to address greenhouse gas emissions.

So far the federal government has contributed to reducing Canada's emissions through stringent regulations for the transportation and electricity sectors, two of the largest sources of emissions in Canada.

As a result of our action to date, Canada has strengthened its position as a world leader in clean electricity generation by becoming the first major coal user to ban future construction of traditional coal-fired electricity generation units. In 2025, passenger vehicles and light trucks will emit about half as many greenhouse gas emissions as 2008 models, and greenhouse gas emissions from 2018 model year heavy-duty vehicles will be reduced by up to 23%.

Our collective actions are achieving success. Between 2005 and 2011, Canadian GHG emissions have decreased by 4.8%, while the economy has grown by 8.4%. Moreover, per capita emissions are at an historic low of 20.4 tons of carbon dioxide equivalent per person, their lowest level since tracking began in 1990.

Our government will continue to show strong leadership on this file.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, it is hard to know where to start.

The obvious point is, number one, there is no answer to the question I asked, which was “Will the Prime Minister of Canada accept the invitation from the United Nations Secretary General to attend the leaders' summit?”

Adjournment Proceedings

I do have to point out that I was at COP 19 in Warsaw, and no one publicly thanked Canada for our environmental record. It simply did not happen.

I heard the Minister of the Environment, in the House, claim that Mexico had thanked us and Colombia thanked us. Unless she was at a dinner table with one of the delegations and they thanked her for passing the salt, and I cannot rule that out, no one thanked Canada. As a matter of fact, we were singled out as a country that was unhelpful.

As for reductions of greenhouse gases, the only measure the government has taken, and I support it, is the light trucks and cars regulations we took to be in lockstep with the U.S. car market. Those are good. They will reduce greenhouse gases, but only by a very small proportion.

We have seen the leadership coming from provinces. It comes from B.C. with our carbon tax there on fuels and from Ontario with the shutting down of its coal-fired power plants. The figure my hon. friend uses, 734 megatons by 2020, is far above the target of 607 megatons.

In the limited time I have, I have to say there has been no leadership from Canada and there has been no answer from the government.

• (1850)

Mr. Scott Armstrong: Mr. Speaker, as I have highlighted, Canada remains committed to addressing climate change as highlighted by our actions and our leadership on this issue.

I have already alluded to these actions, which include our world-leading coal-fired electricity regulations. These regulations will make Canada the first country to effectively ban the construction of traditional coal units. We will be the first country.

In fact, in the first 21 years, these regulations are expected to result in a cumulative reduction in greenhouse gas emissions of about 214 megatons, equivalent to removing some 2.6 million personal vehicles from the road per year.

In terms of international actions, Canada has provided \$1.2 billion in unconditional fast-start finance over 2010-12 to support mitigation and adaptation efforts in over 60 developing countries. This represented Canada's largest-ever contribution to support international efforts to address climate change. That is leadership.

We will continue to show leadership on this file. We are getting the job done, unlike previous governments.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:51 p.m.)

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