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Monday, December 9, 2013

—

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, December 9, 2013

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayers

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1100)

[English]

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Brian Jean (Fort McMurray—Athabasca, CPC) moved that Bill C-526, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (sentencing), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I thank all my colleagues who appreciate this government's stance on taking care of business as far as criminals go. I have seen more criminal laws come into place over the last 10 years, I think, than the previous 20 years. It shows the importance to this government of ensuring that we crack down on crime and protect Canadians.

I am very pleased to stand today in support of the bill. It comes about as a result of my own practice in law. I spent most of the 1990s practising criminal law and other forms of litigation in northern Alberta. During that time, I saw some very horrendous crimes that I felt did not have proper punishment, as a result of the inability of judges to, in essence, throw the book at people who are involved in more serious crimes. When I say that, I talk about crimes that I find particularly repugnant; those crimes that include more than two people, for instance, three or more people. Those people usually start with low-level crimes, where they are organized and they talk about it. Then they move on to higher-level crimes, if indeed they get away with them or the judicial system has no ability to crack down on them.

In particular, Bill C-526 would strengthen the Criminal Code's response to organized crime and terrorism. I know that terrorism does not happen very often in this country, thank goodness. However, we do have a situation where criminal organizations are very active in this country. Make no mistake, criminal organizations account for a very large amount of crime, more particularly the very serious nature of the crimes themselves, such as murders, arsons or things like that. Most serious crimes that include violence are more likely gang related and related to organized crime. This government has been committed to taking steps to ensure these crimes are treated as among the most serious in the Criminal Code.

I intend, today, through this bill, to allow judges more discretion at the final disposition of sentence and also to enable crown prosecutors to do what they do a lot of, which is plea bargaining, to get a situation that they may not receive a conviction on but that allows the judge to, in essence, throw the book at them at the time of sentencing.

This proposal is to amend the Criminal Code sentencing provision that sets out factors which should be considered to be aggravating or mitigating, in essence, aggravating factors. If they are involved in the crime themselves and the facts have been proven, the person would be found to be more liable and could receive a larger sentence. This means, as well, that the judge would increase or decrease sentence as a result of those factors that arose during the commission of the offence.

It proposes to amend the list of aggravating factors in two ways.

First, it would create a new aggravating factor for sentencing where there is evidence that an offence was connected in any way to a group of three or more persons who had a common purpose of facilitating or committing an offence under the Criminal Code or any act of Parliament.

Second, the bill proposes to create a new category of serious aggravating factors, which would include evidence that the offence was committed for the benefit of, at the direction of, or in association with a criminal organization, or there was evidence that the offence was a terrorism offence, which is very serious indeed.

This last amendment aims to send a very important message of public policy from our government and from all future governments; that is, that organized crime and terrorism offences are among the most serious offences in the Criminal Code and that the courts should not tolerate them. They should consider them to be even more serious aggravating factors, as specified in the Criminal Code.

These factors play an important role in the judicial process of determining an appropriate sentence for a convicted offender.

The Criminal Code actually enumerates some specific factors that Parliament considers to be aggravating or mitigating. This list is not exhaustive, but it would certainly give judges and the judiciary a specific direction as to how public policy should be placed on these people and how they should treat them when convicted. Factors in this provision must be taken into consideration by a judge. They are actually asked to consider them under this legislation.

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However, a judge can also consider other aggravating or mitigating factors that arise in those particular cases. It would give judges the discretion, and it would clearly enumerate that this government, and, I, in particular, have faith in the judiciary. If given the proper tools, they will throw the book at these criminals who participate in such despicable behaviour.

● (1105)

There are strong public policy reasons to treat offences that are committed by three or more people with greater severity than offences committed by one individual. I do not think I need to go into detail on that. Most Canadians would agree that three or more people who are involved in an offence, who would commit some criminal behaviour, should be treated differently than those who are singularly involved. It shows more complexity and more of a desire to be involved in this type of element.

The Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics released a report in November of this year, entitled "Co-offending in Canada, 2011", which examined co-offending trends in Canada. It defined co-offending as being crimes involving two or more accused people, and group crimes as being crimes involving three or more accused people.

Group crimes are what I am interested in with the first amendment. Group crimes only account for 3% of criminal incidents in Canada. Most people would say that is not a lot, but the truth is that for a number of reasons we should give more attention to these crimes. They are more serious in nature. As I mentioned before, when three or more people are involved in an offence, the offence usually involves more serious repercussions to individuals and victims. For instance, first, the offences are more likely to involve a firearm or another weapon. Second, when a violent crime is committed by a group, the chance that the victim will be injured or killed is much higher. Third, hate crimes, which are so despicable in this country, tend to involve groups or other individuals more than non-hate crimes. These statistics, although small in number, show that the repercussions and the impact on victims are much more serious than if they are incidents committed by a single offender.

These recent statistics also reveal that co-offending and group crimes are a trend that is more likely to be among young people, or youthful offenders. That is also a difficulty because these crimes, for youth, set the trend for them for future years. Judges need to be able to stop them at that age. The crimes that youth are involved in include breaking and entering, arson, robbery, possession of stolen property and theft. Indeed, there is no victimless crime in these types of incidents. There is also a connection between group crimes and co-offending and the eventual formation of more structured criminal enterprises for youth and others.

I have been told startling statistics, such as that it is 8% of crimes that are ever solved. If youth commit crimes with three or more people, they get away with them and are enriched by that behaviour, those people are more likely to continue to commit crimes. We need to give the tools to the judiciary to be able to stop them in their tracks so they change their ways.

There is also a connection in other ways to more serious crimes, and that would be involvement with organized crime. That is why I believe there has been a gap in the Criminal Code legislation for

crimes committed by groups of three or more people and being able to punish them adequately to reflect the crime the offenders have been involved in. Although judges can already recognize the seriousness of the commission of a crime by a group at sentencing, Bill C-526 would specify that in every situation where three or more offenders are involved in an offence, this factor shall be taken into consideration. It would give less leeway in a way, but it instructs, on a public policy basis, that judges should take this more seriously and actually throw the book at these people.

Some may question how the aggravating factor differs from the existing aggravating factor for criminal organization offences. In order for a criminal group to fall within the definition of a criminal organization, the commission of the offence must also be motivated by a material benefit for the group. I am not going to go into it in great detail, but let us just say that the changes to the criminal organization offences have not been very effective.

I have worked in the trenches and I have seen what has taken place in criminal courts. I know how plea bargaining and crown prosecutors work, and I know how defence counsels work. Bluntly speaking, it is very difficult to prove that a person is a member of a criminal organization, that the criminal organization was involved, and that indeed the criminal organization is a criminal organization. I have been told, and we have heard it from a particular report, that it takes up to a week or two weeks to prove these particular offence traits and facts. Then they have to do that with every co-accused person, and every new person who belongs to a particular gang or criminal organization, for instance. It is very difficult to prove.

Although the facts are there, and it shows the factors in the Criminal Code relating to criminal organizations and how crown prosecutors can prove it, et cetera, the truth is that very few people were convicted under this provision over the last period of years that it has been in force.

● (1110)

The proposed new aggravating factor in Bill C-526 does not require an element of material benefit. The new aggravating factor would simply include situations where there is evidence that the offence was connected in any way to a group of three or more persons with the common purpose of facilitating or committing an offence under the Criminal Code or any act of Parliament.

While the existing aggravating factor of organized crime may overlap somewhat, and it is agreed it may somewhat overlap, the proposed new aggravating factor, the new factor that I have proposed, is less stringent and captures a broader range of offences. They are more simple to prove, as I mentioned. For example, this new aggravating factor could also apply to a number of different scenarios, such as breaking into a home or business to commit a theft; a sexual assault; offences, as I mentioned, that are motivated by hate, and drug trafficking and auto theft, to name just a few. That is provided, of course, that the offence is committed by a group of three or more persons.

The new aggravating factor would strengthen the Criminal Code because it would capture group crimes that do not meet the definition of organized crime. As I said, it is very difficult to prove. Group crimes may still be very serious, even absent the motive of material benefit. In fact, most Canadians would not understand why they have to prove material benefit under an organized crime scenario, such as in a sexual assault or hate crime. However, from my perspective, it is quite shocking that it is not included in the Criminal Code as such, and I believe there has been a gap that we can fill with this legislation.

While I have spoken at length about the benefits of the new proposed aggravating factor to address group crimes, I must also take a moment to discuss the second proposal. The objective of this new category is to send a message to the courts that these crimes are extremely serious and to give judges further discretion in relation to these types of crimes. I think most Canadians would agree that people who are involved in organized crimes or terrorism offences should have the book thrown at them. We do not want them in Canada. We do not want to encourage those people to be involved in these offences in Canada. We do not want them to do this at all.

When we find these people, we should be able to easily prove that they are those people. For instance, I think members would be surprised to find out that because it is so difficult to prove these offences and the facts of these cases, crown prosecutors have to plea bargain because they do not want these people to get off completely. Plea bargaining in essence means that prosecutors do not get everything they want. They are not going to be able to go to trial and find people guilty of every offence.

Crown prosecutors are going to ask how easy or difficult it will be to prove these three offences. If it is difficult to prove these three offences in criminal organizations, with the group crimes that I have proposed there is a gap that will not allow them to suggest it is going to take two weeks to go to trial, that it will take time and it will be very difficult to prove someone is part of a criminal organization. What would happen now is that the crown prosecutor can say he or she does not need to worry about that criminal organization and to prove that fact. The prosecutor would only need to prove to the judge or justice that there were three or more people involved in the crime. Then the judge can give a more serious penalty, and in fact the judge has to take that into consideration.

I am open to possible amendments from the government or the opposition. I encourage all members to participate in the study of this particular bill. It is a great bill, and I cannot imagine anybody standing against it. However, of course there is always the chance that somebody might feel he or she could do a better job with some particular part of the bill. I am open to that.

I would urge the members of the House, in all parties, to support this bill at second reading so it can be referred to committee for further study. As we know, the ultimate goal of stiffer sentences being imposed on offenders who form a common intent to commit crimes is worthy of support. In many situations, the amendment would apply to gangs that may not meet the criteria to be considered for a criminal organization.

In closing, I consider this to be a very responsible approach to current crime trends and an important message to group crime and

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organized crime offenders. We will stand up for Canadians on this side of the House, and I believe in this particular case that all members of the House will do the same.

• (1115)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for his bill. We will have the opportunity to discuss it further.

Committing an organized crime or terrorism offence now constitutes an aggravating circumstance under paragraphs 718.2(a)(iv) and 718.2(a)(v) of the Criminal Code. Despite my colleague's somewhat inflated rhetoric—and I say this nicely—the only thing Bill C-526 changes is that it creates a serious aggravating factor. This new concept has never been tested in the Criminal Code.

I am trying to understand what he said, because we reviewed the case law on organized crime and terrorism offences and, according to that review, heavy sentences are already being imposed for these offences.

What would his bill be adding other than a certain lack of clarity? In inserting a new concept in the Criminal Code, namely a serious aggravating factor, are we not creating some legal uncertainty that the courts might find difficult to deal with?

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Jean: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, I am open to possible amendments in that particular section of the bill.

I do understand some members have come forward, in particular on our side of the House when I briefed them, with some issues relating to that and muddying the waters or confusing the issues. I do not believe it does, just on the basis of my experience in court. I know the member has had some experience in court as well.

I do believe, however, that the three or more provision is a catch-all. I believe that fills a gap and would, in essence, make it much easier for crown prosecutors to prove their case, and if they cannot prove their case, much easier for crown prosecutors to make a reasonable plea bargain that would see that the accused and convicted would receive a more serious crime based on the facts of the particular case.

I look forward to the member's questions during committee. I certainly look forward to her experience being brought forward, to get a better bill, ultimately, which is why we are here.

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a couple of questions for the hon. member.

I do not think there is anyone who rejects the general principle of the need for deterrence in serious crimes. However, I really wonder whether the bill is, quite frankly, a solution in search of problem.

I have two specific issues. First, there is a line drawn at three people. Why is it not two? Why is it not four? Is there some evidentiary basis for this decision to fix on three people? Is there some indicator in the stats that this is the cut-off at which we have seriously deficient sentences?

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The other issue I am concerned about is the potential unintended circumstances of creating an elevated category of aggravating circumstances. By putting certain factors as “seriously aggravating”, do we not run the risk of some crafty defence counsel being able to successfully argue, “Well, this is a hate crime but it is not a terrorist crime. Hate crimes are only aggravating factors. Terrorist crimes are seriously aggravating factors. Therefore, you should go easy”?

Are we not running that risk by creating this new category? Are we not trying to fix something that is not broken?

• (1120)

Mr. Brian Jean: Mr. Speaker, while I appreciate that, I do not agree with the member. I do believe there is a break.

We heard from experts. We did a study on organized crime some two years ago in the justice committee. We heard from experts who said it was very difficult to indeed prove the fundamentals of organized crime. It is very difficult to get convictions in court. It is very difficult to prove the facts. Indeed, it costs a lot of money for taxpayers to be able to prove this.

I do not believe that at all. In fact, I would like to answer the question that the member first put to me in relation to the group and why three or more. The statistics are startling in relation to when three or more people are involved in a crime. They are usually much more violent crimes.

I think it takes more planning. It takes more people getting together for a longer period of time. It is a complicated situation, usually. It leads to more violent behaviour. As a result, victims are frankly left out in the cold. I have seen situations where three or more people have been involved in a simple assault and a person has died. If that was a one-on-one person crime, the likelihood of that happening is very minimal. Indeed, the statistics bear my argument out.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I always feel privileged to rise in the House to participate in a debate on a bill that is being introduced. There are two reasons for this.

The first is that I take very seriously our role as legislators, which is vested in us as elected members. In this role, I also act as justice critic. Every time a new bill has to do with my responsibilities, I study it carefully to learn its objective.

Then, when we gather the entire caucus of the New Democratic Party to discuss it—we do not really need democratic reform legislation to do this—I make a recommendation based on consultations that I make a point of conducting religiously and rigorously.

This sometimes leads to rather vigorous debate within our caucus, for example, with regard to why we support sending to committee bills at second reading that have me shaking my head. These are most often bills from the Conservative side, whether they are introduced by the government or a backbencher. I try to understand their reasons.

It is often the title of the bill that makes me realize that the Conservatives want to introduce some sort of bumper sticker legislation that is nothing but showy advertising, without any real

content below the surface. We cannot be too careful. Sometimes, when we take a close look at something we can see there is nothing to it.

On this matter, I made a point of contacting people in the field of law whom I respect a great deal and who are often more knowledgeable than I am on matters of criminal law, including law experts at the Barreau du Québec. The president of the Barreau du Québec sent a response regarding Bill C-526, whose fancy title is the “Cracking Down on Organized Crime and Terrorism Act”, as I was saying to the member who introduced the bill in the House. The Conservatives are laying it on a little thick, but when you scratch the surface, there is very little to this bill. Here is the reply from the president of the Barreau du Québec.

The Barreau du Québec questions whether it is really necessary to expand the list of aggravating factors for the various offences in the Criminal Code, since we do not believe that this will help prevent the commission of the offences targeted in the bill.

In our opinion, forcing judges to conclude that there is an “aggravating” factor simply because three people committed a crime together, as opposed to any other number, is pointless in terms of the bill’s objective, which is to protect the public.

This very simple reply goes directly to the question I asked my colleague regarding whether a Criminal Code provision already stipulates that terrorism and criminal organization offences are considered aggravating factors when someone is found guilty. This bill introduces the notion of a serious aggravating factor, and I have to wonder about this, since it is a concept that does not exist in the Criminal Code and could cause some problems.

However, there will be an opportunity to examine it more closely. Given that our debates here are often limited, at committee is usually where we can do a more thorough examination and hear from experts who point things out to us that we may not have considered in a more superficial study at second reading.

I find the bill somewhat pointless overall. I am talking about it because this is perhaps one of the last “law and order” bills we will have the chance to look at before we break for the holidays.

When I have the honour of rising in the House, it is also because, above all, I respect my primary role, which is to represent the people of my riding of Gatineau. When I go into the community to speak with them, they talk to me about the justice system. The government is determined to blame the courts for everything that goes wrong, but the government itself is often at fault. Introducing small bills that serve no real purpose will not address certain issues.

• (1125)

I want to share with my colleagues a letter I received that deeply touched me because of my role as a legislator and as justice critic. However, I think that justice concerns us all, no matter what our role in our respective party.

Eric and Jill Faulks, grandparents who live in British Columbia, wrote to me as the NDP justice critic. They also wrote to the Minister of Justice. This is what they said:

[*English*]

Our 18 year old grandson, Travis Hurlbert, was killed in an automobile collision in Edmonton on July 24th, 2013.

It is hard for our family to consider this less than murder under the circumstances. We understand that the alleged perpetrator had a DUI against him in 2006, was fined 3 times in 2010 for driving while disqualified, and charged again in May 2012 but did not show up for his court date in July 2012. Police then issued a warrant for his arrest. A year later with his address apparently known, he was still free to kill.

[*Translation*]

That is a real-life situation. It relates to our daily lives. That is the kind of scenario that makes people, taxpayers, Canadians and Quebecers question the justice system.

The justice system has several components. For example, one component consists of bills such as this one, which claim to address this and that. At the end of the day, they solve nothing. Laws exist, but there is a problem, and that problem is not the sentences being handed down.

Hon. members will recall that at one point this summer, the RCMP told us how long it takes to add offences to an individual's criminal record. That information was provided by the provincial justice departments. Even if an individual is sentenced to 12 years in prison, if the sentence and the fact that he was found guilty are not recorded in his criminal record, we can create every law imaginable and it will not do any good.

We have to give our police officers resources and put more officers in the field to make sure that a sickening individual like that cannot hurt anyone. He did not even bother to show up in court. There was a warrant for his arrest. He was not allowed to drive and was told so three or four times, but there he was behind the wheel again. If our society cannot do something about that, there is a problem somewhere.

I am not trying to downplay the importance of Bill C-526 and the kind of offences it is trying to cover, but there are more serious issues.

On the one hand, we have this bill, even though an aggravating circumstance already exists for the same kinds of offences, and the sponsor wants to bring in something new that will give lawyers an excuse to go on ad nauseam. On the other hand, on the ground, I need answers for the people who contact me as justice critic and ask me what I am doing with this. They want to know what we politicians are doing as Christmas approaches and they have to live without their grandson. I cannot fathom how they manage to sleep at night. I feel that they have failed dismally.

This letter is worth reading because it conveys beautiful ideas about life. These people could have wanted that man to die. Who would blame them? They lost their 18-year-old grandson, who missed out on doing all kinds of things. He had his whole life ahead of him. He was slain by a sickening man who should not even have been there, but who was because society failed dismally. Those people say that after the first offence, the offender needs help and society should try to reintegrate him properly. The second time around, people start asking questions. Whatever happened did not work because the person did not learn.

Yes, we will support Bill C-526 at second reading, but I would like everyone to think about something. Instead of fixating on this or that and paying people to come up with slogans and all kinds of bills, how about putting money where it is really needed? How about more

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police officers and more services to crack down on repeat offenders when we know that is what they are?

Judges can do everything in their power, but if they do not know that the person before them has already committed a crime, they cannot give the most appropriate sentence taking into consideration the fact that it is a repeat offence.

[*English*]

Shame on us for not really taking care of business the way it should be.

Merry Christmas.

• (1130)

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today the Conservative member of Parliament for Fort McMurray—Athabasca is presenting his bill, another bill on crime.

I want to state from the outset and for the record how troubling it is to be presented with yet another private member's bill related to crime. I will not suggest today, though, as I often do, that the bill was prepared by the PMO and disguised as a private member's bill. I do not think even the PMO would have suggested a bill that does so little. I honestly believe that this is a solution seeking a problem.

Would it not be nice if, just for once, someone over there would use the opportunity of private members' business to place before the House a proposal that would actually make a difference for people, such as do something that would signal a nod to poverty or inequality, or acknowledge the fact that crime is often rooted in poverty and in mental health issues? Would it not be great if, just for once, someone over there would do something that was decent, rather than focus on or be motivated by an obsession with crime and punishment?

Would it not be great if the Conservatives would put some of that energy into actually helping to prevent crime by supporting community programming to help young people who, through no fault of their own, grow up in systemic poverty, who come from troubled families, and who are often exposed to addiction from early ages? Would that not have been a much better use of time and effort?

Instead, we get this, which is another so-called crime bill tinkering around the edges of the Criminal Code.

Why, I ask, did the member not present a bill that would tackle a real issue, such as the overrepresentation of aboriginals in the prison system? Why did he not put forth a bill calling for a national strategy to tackle poverty, which is again the root of much of the crime he and his party are so obsessed with? Why did he not put forth a bill that would help tackle addiction among young people, which is again the root of much of the crime he and his party are so obsessed with?

Why did he not put forward a bill to encourage more support for our veterans who suffer from PTSD?

Why did he not put forward a bill to address youth unemployment, which is so rampant in Canada, and which the government has done so little to address?

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Why did he not produce a bill to remove political control over government to advertising and call for an independent watchdog so that we could finally do away with the over \$500 million, and counting, of wasted government propaganda and unprecedented abuse of taxpayer money, all for the benefit of the Conservative Party? Why did he not put forward a proposal calling for sweeping changes to election fraud to put an end to the shenanigans his party now stands accused of?

Instead, we get another pointless bill that does nothing to help.

Such is the manner in which the Conservative government and its compliant backbench operate. They are so obsessed at showing themselves as being tough on crime that at times they seem to practically fall over one another to prove themselves.

To listen to the Conservatives, one would think that crime is rampant and that riots are breaking out across the country.

The Conservatives peddle in fear and propaganda for political party purposes. Part of peddling falsehoods about crime in Canada and part of the real purpose for all these crime bills is to raise money from the narrow-minded group they call their base.

The House knows the group of which I speak. It is the group of right-wingers who constitute the backbone of the Conservative Party. They are the people who loathe the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. They loathe it so much that when Canadians sought to honour its 30th anniversary, they ignored them. Instead, they issued a belated press release, and that was it. They issued a press release to honour the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. There was no year-long celebration of the charter, unlike the effort to worship the War of 1812, an exercise in propaganda that wasted millions of dollars in doing so. There was not a chance they would honour a document like the charter that actually makes a difference to Canadians, but for any 200-year-old wars used for propaganda purposes they would give \$12 million.

What we have here are amendments to the sentencing provisions of the Criminal Code. As we have heard, these amendments create a new aggravating factor, one that fixes a number of three persons as the level at which something goes from not being an aggravating factor to being an aggravating factor.

•(1135)

Why three? Why not four? Why not two? Why not some other number? There is a real sense of arbitrariness that defies explanation.

The bill creates a new category of aggravating factors, a super-category called “serious aggravating factors”, and it lifts two of the aggravating factors presently contained in the code and elevates them to another level. They relate specifically to organized crime and to terrorists. Again, I say this is a solution in search of a problem. There is no indication, no evidentiary basis, on which to suggest that sentences for organized crime or terrorism are too light. If there were, why not increase the sentences?

We are tinkering with a coherent sentencing regime that is set forth within the Criminal Code, and this tinkering could have unintended consequences. By creating a new super-category, are we suggesting that in all cases a mobster is worse than a neo-Nazi? That

is essentially the type of argument that this bill is bound to produce once it runs through the test of everyday litigation.

We in the Liberal Party believe in evidence-based policy-making. There is absolutely no evidence that sentences for organized crime or for terrorists are too low. In fact, the most recent example of a case involving a terrorist conviction and sentencing in terrorist cases is the Khawaja case in Ontario. In 2006, at trial, Mr. Khawaja was sentenced to 10 years. When it went to appeal, the appeal court found that the sentence was too light and sentenced him to life. That sentence was upheld before the Supreme Court of Canada, so there is no empirical evidence to suggest that there is a problem here.

We are concerned that an otherwise coherent sentencing regime is being tinkered with solely for political purposes. This is so that the opposition parties can be goaded into voting against a bill that is arbitrary and redundant for the sole purpose of appealing to the base. We support measures that deter organized crime and terrorism—everyone does—but the bill is redundant and arbitrary. It misses the mark.

I am pleased to hear the member say that he is open to suggested amendments from the government side and from the opposition benches. I hope he is genuine in that regard, because when this matter gets before committee, I expect we will be going on that search for some empirical evidence to justify what has been put in the bill with respect to the Criminal Code. If we do not find it, I would hope that the bill is going to be scrapped. If there is some other way to address what is a real evil, not a perceived evil, my hope is that we will have opportunity to deal with that.

The obsession with crime within the Conservative ranks is indeed troubling. Just recently we heard the Minister of Justice suggest that on arrest, we should be able to take a DNA sample prior to any conviction. This, of course, would undoubtedly be found to be wholly unconstitutional, but it sure would make the Conservative base happy as we gear up for what is likely to be a pending leadership.

This obsession with looking tough on crime, I would submit, should be of grave concern to the House and to Canadians. When will the Conservatives get tough on fighting poverty? When will they get tough on fighting climate change? When will they get tough on fighting for health care? When will they get tough on helping the most vulnerable? When will they stop putting ideology over facts and evidence? The only thing the government is tough on is the truth, and it is Canadians who will suffer as a result.

•(1140)

Mr. David Wilks (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today and have the opportunity to participate in the second reading debate of Bill C-526. The bill is an important initiative to strengthen the Criminal Code's treatment of organized crime and terrorism offences and is one that the government supports.

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It is without doubt that organized crime and terrorism offences are among the most serious in Canada. One need look no further than the April 2013 arrests of individuals in Toronto and Montreal for alleged terrorism offences to know that the threat of terrorism is ongoing and ever-present. The terrorist threats Canadians face at home are most often connected with and inspired by developments in terrorist threats abroad. Homegrown violent extremists have been involved in attempts to recruit supporters, raise funds, or acquire other forms of support.

At the same time, organized crime has become increasingly widespread and sophisticated. Organized crime groups, including street gangs, exist in almost every region of the country and are involved in numerous illegal markets. In 2011 CSIS, Canada's criminal intelligence service, identified 729 organized groups in Canada. They estimate that illegal drugs make up 57% of the illegal marketplace in Canada. Financial crime, human trafficking, migrant smuggling, and the illegal movement of firearms, tobacco, and vehicles are also lucrative for organized crime in Canada. Criminal organizations also target vulnerable youth and recruit them into gangs to carry out illicit activities.

Bill C-526 complements the work already undertaken by our government to strengthen the Criminal Code's response to organized crime and terrorism.

With respect to organized crime, our government has introduced a number of other pieces of legislation. In 2008, Parliament enacted Bill C-2, the tackling violent crime act, which increased some mandatory minimum penalties for gun crimes linked with organized crime. In 2009, Bill C-14, an act to amend the Criminal Code with regard to organized crime and protection of justice system participants, was enacted. It deemed murders committed on behalf of criminal organizations to be first degree murder and created a new offence targeting drive-by shootings. Bill C-10, the safe streets and communities act, became law in 2012. It enacted mandatory minimum penalties for serious drug crimes, including those linked to organized crime.

The government has also introduced two bills to address terrorism. Bill S-7, the combatting terrorism act, came into force on July 15, 2013, and added four new terrorism offences to the Criminal Code. Bill S-9, the nuclear terrorism act, also created four new offences and came into force on November 1, 2013.

Bill C-526 proposes to provide further direction to the courts by adding to the existing enumerated list of aggravating factors that should be considered when sentencing an offender. It would create a new aggravating factor that would apply to sentencing when there is evidence that an offence was connected in any way to a group of three or more persons with a common purpose of facilitating or committing an offence under the Criminal Code or any other act of Parliament. This means that judges all across Canada would be able to justify the imposition of a serious penalty in cases of groups of three or more committing an offence together.

Bill C-526 also proposes to take two of the existing aggravating factors, those being terrorism and organized crime offences, and elevate them to a new category of serious aggravating factors, indicating to the courts that these offences should be treated more seriously than the other aggravating factors.

This codification of aggravating factors plays an important role in the ongoing dialogue between Parliament and the courts. They provide legislative direction to the courts that Parliament intends that in crimes in which these factors are present, a stiffer sentence should be imposed.

• (1145)

In situations where a prosecutor chooses to rely upon an aggravating factor in sentencing, and that factor has not been established during the trial as part of the offence for which the accused is convicted, the prosecutor must establish it beyond a reasonable doubt at the sentencing stage. In cases involving organized crime that are not charged under one of the specific organized crime offences, generally the onus is on the prosecutor to prove the existence of a criminal organization at the sentencing stage if it was not proven during the trial. In some cases, this can be challenged. For example, when there is no witness willing to testify as to the existence of a criminal organization, the crown must rely on evidence such as wire taps or undercover operations, which can be dangerous, expensive, and time-consuming endeavours.

It could appear that the new aggravating factors are simply a legislative attempt to sidestep the evidentiary hurdle by introducing a new aggravating factor that does not contain this requirement. This is not the case. There are important distinctions between the organized crime aggravating factor and the proposed factor we are debating today. While there is some overlap between the two, they describe two different situations.

The new aggravating factor would include situations where there is evidence that an offence was connected, in any way, to a group of three or more persons with the common purpose of facilitating or committing an offence under the Criminal Code or any other act of Parliament. While the existing organized crime factor may overlap with this new aggravating factor, the new factor would actually go beyond and capture a much broader range of offences and would directly address the serious issue of co-offending.

Group crimes, like organized crime offences, involve three or more individuals who plot together to commit a crime. The distinction between the two is that in organized crime situations, there always has to be a structured criminal organization, and the motive for committing the crime is to obtain a material benefit for the group or for a member of the group.

The new aggravating factor is much broader. It would capture random groups of people who form a common intent to commit any crime for any purpose, not just for material benefit. It would capture crimes such as group sexual assaults or hate crimes committed by a gang of racists, to name a few. It is easy to see that the two aggravating factors are really quite distinct.

Private Members' Business

It is important to keep in mind that a crime committed by a group has the potential to be more dangerous and more serious than a crime committed by a single person. For example, compare a traditional mugging, by a single offender, and a swarming, where a gang of individuals descends upon a victim to either rob or assault the victim. In many cases, the victim is far more likely to be overpowered and seriously injured than if confronted by just one person. Both types of crime are terrible, but when we multiply the number of people involved in an offence, the level of risk to the safety of the victim can quickly escalate.

Bill C-526, introduced by the member for Fort McMurray—Athabasca, would strengthen the Criminal Code and provide clarity in police investigations when dealing with crimes involving three or more persons. “Three or more persons” has already been set as having precedence in the Criminal Code under section 63(1), which anyone can find.

In closing, I encourage all members to support this bill and vote in favour of it moving forward to committee.

• (1150)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jonathan Genest-Jourdain (Manicouagan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my contribution to the debate on the assessment of the merits of Bill C-526, which has to do with sentencing based on a scheme proper to criminal proceedings, will focus on the principles that should guide the study in committee. However, I would also like to focus on the questionable practice of codifying sentencing criteria.

An assessment of merit can definitely be used in a work context and in labour relations. When we have to assess an employee, often we weigh the major advantages, the strengths and the weaknesses of that person. In my view, this type of reasoning and exercise can also be used to evaluate the bills we are asked to study. In this case, I want to emphasize the fact that this is a private member's bill. Ideals must prevail. In this case, the bill deals first and foremost with the principle of sentencing and sentencing submissions. At the risk of repeating myself, I would say that criminal law is based on practice and custom. Criminal law is rooted in common law. It differs widely from one judicial district to the next.

For example, in the judicial district around Fort McMurray, the law may be somewhat harsher given the degradation and deterioration of the social fabric. During the summer, a social worker told me that Fort McMurray has many problems related to the resurgence and reappearance of syphilis in the region. That indicates that there is criminal activity and that, in some parts of Canada, the courts have to rely on stricter sentencing principles. That explains somewhat why judicial districts are different and unique.

Until just recently—and I would like to think that it is still the case—judges and crown prosecutors were afforded considerable latitude in determining the appropriate sentence for any given offence. When I said that criminal law is based on custom, I meant that, in such a case, during submissions on sentencing, the crown prosecutors make their case based on the case law and doctrine. However, the defence lawyers also do the same. In the end, the judge is free to make the most appropriate decision. In this case, with this bill, the government is once again trying to interfere in the administration of justice. It is clear that the government is interfering in this area, but it has also

interfered in other matters over the past few years. During their time in office, the Conservatives have been using backdoor schemes to try to influence or interfere in matters that, until just recently, were enshrined in law and whose fairness and transparency were above reproach.

I would like to stress that it is not necessary to add to the list of aggravating factors for various offences set out in the Criminal Code. The Criminal Code already contains a fairly substantial list of aggravating factors. During submissions on sentencing, judges and crown prosecutors point out what elements of the case should be considered aggravating factors. It is then up to the judge to make a decision in that regard.

Based on that observation, it is essential that we examine certain aspects of this bill more closely in order to assess the reach of a new category of serious aggravating factors. There is a scale. The next thing you know, we will be talking about supreme universal aggravating factors. At some point, we are going to run out of adjectives.

We are talking about serious aggravating factors, their possible interpretation by the judiciary and the specific nature of item 718.2 (a)(i)(F), which provides a different definition of a criminal organization than the Criminal Code does. Bill C-526 refers to three offences, which I will quickly mention.

The first is an offence that is connected in any way to a group of three or more persons with a common purpose of facilitating or committing an offence. In my opinion, that is already covered by the Criminal Code. The second is an offence that is committed in association with a criminal organization, and the third is a terrorism offence. This is already an aggravating factor under section 718.2 of the existing Criminal Code.

I would like to mention in passing that the Conservative government's revisionist legislative initiatives have been a recurring theme throughout its time in office. I stress the word “revisionist” because it applies not only to criminal law or the practice of law but to many other areas as well, including terrorism.

• (1155)

I must say that it is a bit unrealistic, especially considering the reality in Canada. However, this notion seems to catch people's attention and they really focus on it. Ultimately, it is redundant, since the criteria are being added.

However, I think that this private member's bill—and other experts and lawyers agree—is primarily meant to please a voter base. We are approaching the holidays, and this government that claims to be tough on crime has some work to do, especially if you look at the latest statistics and polling data. This government tries to please its voter base and the big lobbies as much as possible.

The prison population is also part of the economy. Some people think that is appalling and controversial, but others believe that they account for a significant part of our country's economic development. This legislation clearly shows that.

I would now like to talk about sentencing submissions, since that is the crux of this issue. The criteria and aggravating circumstances come into play during sentencing submissions. Both attorneys are present for sentencing arguments. In serious cases, such as terrorism, conspiracies or organized crime, sentencing submissions are most often a separate step. When the offender is found guilty, there is another step that can last several days or several weeks, based on the severity of the case. For homicides, sentencing submissions can last several weeks. That is when jurists and lawyers—both the Crown and the defence—will make their arguments and will of course base them on legislation, but also doctrine and jurisprudence, including corresponding or similar decisions.

This is a familiar process that is rather amicable, if I can call it that. I like to think that criminal law is primarily something you learn on the job and that it reflects the particularities of a given judicial district. That is why there was so much latitude and why the judge had plenty of leeway in imposing a sentence informed by the circumstances.

The Conservatives are once again trying to impose their vision. Earlier, I heard the hon. member opposite—I remember now—minimizing the validity of plea bargaining. He said that, often, people are linked, that plea bargaining is the last resort and that people are forced to resort to it for lack of an appropriate sentence. Plea bargaining saves Canadians a substantial amount of money and greases the wheels of the justice system, speeding everything up or at least creating a more fluid legal process. That is why plea bargaining remains essential. In the end, the lawyers come to a consensus.

This is the umpteenth time the Conservatives have tried to control the administration of justice, which is utterly deplorable. They will pay the price eventually. The experts at the Canadian Bar Association also zeroed in on the compellability nature of the proposed additions. In their opinion:

...forcing judges to conclude that three people committing a crime together, as opposed to any other number, is an aggravating circumstance, does not advance the goal of protecting the public, which is the point of this bill.

On that note, I will allow the House to digest what I have just said. Good afternoon.

● (1200)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired, and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the order paper.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

LETTER TO THE HON. MEMBER FOR TERREBONNE—BLAINVILLE

Ms. Charmaine Borg (Terrebonne—Blainville, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to raise a question of privilege regarding a letter I received on Friday, December 6, from Senator Dagenais, a letter that I consider insulting and, quite frankly, hostile.

Privilege

My question of privilege follows a point of order already raised by my House leader, the hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

Last Friday, Senator Dagenais decided to send a letter, not only to me but to all senators and all members of the House of Commons, as well as their assistants. That letter can only be described as a vicious personal attack against me.

In the letter, Mr. Dagenais is reacting to a document I sent to my constituents as part of the NDP's campaign to abolish the Senate, an unelected body that is not accountable to Canadians and is currently being investigated by the RCMP.

Mr. Speaker, I will spare you the exact content of the letter, because if I were to read it here, you would probably tell me that my language was unparliamentary. Let me simply say that the content of the letter is condescending and misogynistic.

The part that disgusts me the most is when Senator Dagenais suggests that I should go to the library and read a book, as though I were a little girl who does not take her work seriously. Nothing could be further from the truth. It is stunts like this that discourage young women from entering politics.

[English]

Again, for Senator Dagenais to suggest that I should go to the library and read a book or two is very insulting, as the overall tone of this letter suggests that I am simply a little girl who does not take her work seriously.

I will tell you, now, Mr. Speaker, this old-school mentality that appears to be entrenched in Senator Dagenais' political outlook is the exact type of barrier that young women face and struggle against when they make the decision to engage in political life.

[Translation]

I am particularly saddened today to see that political debate has reached a new low because of Senator Dagenais. I was elected by my constituents to have intelligent debates on facts, not to respond to cheap political and personal shots. That is why I am raising this issue today, in the hope that the necessary steps will be taken and that we will be able to move on and get back to debating important issues for Canadians.

I can say that abolishing the Senate is one of those important issues. In his letter, Senator Dagenais says that abolishing the Senate is not part of the NDP platform. Where has the senator been over the past few years? I would really like to know. The fact is that abolishing the Senate has been part of the NDP platform for decades.

Business of Supply

This year alone, I have attended over 300 events in my riding. I have knocked on thousands of doors and I can say that many of the constituents I met said that they were disgusted by the Senate scandal and that they are concerned about the Senate not representing their interests.

I am certainly not going to apologize for sending out pamphlets that directly address the concerns of my constituents. Senator Dagenais in fact epitomizes the very Senate practices that we condemn. As we know, he ran and lost in the 2011 election in Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot. However, just a year later, the Prime Minister rewarded him for his loyal services with a high paying job in the Senate, until he retires at age 75.

Since 2011, the Prime Minister, who promised not to appoint anyone to the Senate, has appointed 59 senators, including 10 defeated Conservative candidates.

Unlike Mr. Dagenais, I was democratically elected by the people in my riding, who are proud to be represented in the House of Commons by the NDP.

● (1205)

[English]

As opposed to Senator Dagenais, who was hand-picked for the Senate by the Prime Minister shortly after he failed to be elected in the 2011 federal election, my constituents democratically elected me to serve their interests in Ottawa. I am honoured to do so and they are proud to be represented in the House of Commons by the NDP.

[Translation]

We know that intimidation, obstruction and interference in the work of any member of Parliament are considered to be a breach of privilege against that member and are considered to be contempt of Parliament.

On pages 230 and 231 of *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada*, second edition, Maingot states:

Any form of intimidation...of a person for or on account of his behaviour during a proceeding in Parliament could amount to contempt.

The damage that Mr. Dagenais did to my reputation with this letter could undermine my work as a member of Parliament and therefore hurt my own constituents.

On page 111 of O'Brien and Bosc, the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, it states:

The unjust damaging of a Member's good name might be seen as constituting an obstruction if the Member is prevented from performing his or her parliamentary functions. In 1987, Speaker Fraser stated:

The privileges of a Member are violated by any action which might impede him or her in the fulfilment of his or her duties and functions. It is obvious that the unjust damaging of a reputation could constitute such an impediment. The normal course of a Member who felt himself or herself to be defamed would be the same as that available to any other citizen, recourse to the courts under the laws of defamation with the possibility of damages to substitute for the harm that might be done. However, should the alleged defamation take place on the floor of the House, this recourse is not available.

I would also like to point out what O'Brien and Bosc has to say on pages 96 and 97 with respect to defamatory materials that may circulate about a member of Parliament, which is the case here:

Members also act at their peril when they transmit otherwise defamatory material for purposes unconnected with a parliamentary proceeding...Telecommunications, including technology such as electronic mail, facsimile machines and the Internet, should therefore not be used to transmit otherwise defamatory material.

That is exactly what happened. For that reason, I maintain that this incident represents a breach of my privileges and contempt of Parliament. A letter was sent that was defamatory, misogynistic and condescending to me, and to all my colleagues and to all senators. I believe that the senator acted in this way because he disagrees with the NDP policy that would defend Canadians by abolishing the unelected and unaccountable Senate.

If you find, as I do, that this is a question of privilege, I will move the appropriate motion to send this matter to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

In addition, I invite Senator Dagenais to do the right thing: resign right now and stand for election in my riding of Terrebonne—Blainville in 2015 so we can have a real debate. That is democracy.

● (1210)

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The Chair thanks the hon. member for Terrebonne—Blainville for her presentation. The Chair will consider it and return to the House at the appropriate time with a ruling.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—CANADA AND QUEBEC PENSION PLANS

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP) moved:

That the House call on the government to commit to supporting an immediate phase-in of increases to basic public pension benefits under the Canada and Quebec Pension Plans at the upcoming meeting of federal, provincial and territorial finance ministers.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Today being the last allotted day for the supply period ending December 10, 2013, the House will proceed as usual to the consideration and passage of the appropriation bills.

In view of recent procedures, do hon. members agree to have the bills distributed now?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[English]

Mr. Murray Rankin: Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques.

I am proud to have introduced and to lead off debate today on the following important motion:

That the House call on the government to commit to supporting an immediate phase-in of increases to basic public pension benefits under the Canada and Quebec Pension Plans at the upcoming meeting of federal, provincial and territorial finance ministers.

Business of Supply

The meeting is to take place later this month at Meech Lake.

New Democrats are demanding that the government take immediate action on this incredibly important issue. The Ontario Liberal premier calls it a “huge economic crisis”. Pension security is one of the key challenges of our time. There is a rare opportunity now to find a lasting solution and I believe we must seize that opportunity.

It is rare to find an apparent consensus of provincial and territorial finance ministers that the CPP needs to be increased, along with its Quebec equivalent, le Régime de rentes du Québec. This agreement is mirrored by a remarkable agreement among leading economists, the Canadian Labour Congress, the Canadian Association of Retired Persons, even the editorial board of *The Globe and Mail*, all saying we must act and we must act now. It is also supported by Bernard Dussault, who was of course the chief actuary of the Canada pension plan and old age security program from 1992 to 1997.

The government seems to want to offer us a false choice. It does not have a viable alternative to increasing the retirement savings of workers. It simply points to voluntary saving schemes, RRSPs and the “pooled” registered pension plan. It simply does not understand the importance of economic security for hard-working families or the importance of urgent repairs to our frayed social safety net to Canada's economic security. If we do not act to improve our pension security, we may consign an entire generation to a retirement in poverty. Failing to provide a safety net for those in their senior years will be a betrayal of that generation. It will be another cruel example of our kids inheriting the largest social, economic and ecological debt in Canadian history.

Although great strides have been made to help the seniors of our generation, our children and grandchildren will simply not be able to retire in dignity. Women, especially, will be hurt. Ironically, if we do not fix the Canada and Quebec pension plans, a future government may very well likely have to pay for social assistance to help that generation in order to make sure those people are taken care of. In other words, it will be the taxpayer who foots the bill rather than a shared investment program between employers and employees.

Right now, only 13.8% of Canadians have access to a workplace pension plan. Less than a third of Canadians have access to a defined benefit plan and only 17% of employees in the private sector have access to a defined benefit plan, down from over 30% in 1982.

In 2008, 122,000 to 567,000 seniors were living in poverty, depending on how one defines that term. These numbers tell a story of an increasingly insecure retirement future for Canadians. It is clear that if we do not act to secure pensions, the very stability of Canada's economic future is at risk. However, as *The Globe and Mail* has noted, we have an enormous success story in Canada. The Canada Pension Plan Investment Board has provided remarkable returns in virtually every year, except the year after the economic downturn of 2008. For example, over the last 10 years, the board has earned an annualized rate of return of 5.5%, even after taking into account inflation. That is certainly better than the returns on most RRSPs.

In fact, just today, Statistics Canada said the CPP and Quebec pension plan grew at a rate of 13.7% between 2011 and 2012, outpacing all other pension assets. By contrast, individual registered

savings plans grew 8% over the same period, yet Conservatives appear to be refusing to expand this effective investment tool for the benefit of all Canadians.

● (1215)

Those who argue against increasing the CPP and QPP usually have two key arguments, and I will address them both.

The first is, as they say, is to do the right thing for our next generation, which would be taking a risk with our fragile economic economy.

The second, they say, is that we should just keep on going with the voluntary programs that the insurance companies and others provide, pooled pension plans and the like, and that should do the trick.

Let me examine these arguments in turn.

First, on the economic consequences, if recent history is a guide, then an increase in the CPP will not have the dire economic consequences the government predicts. Professor Rhys Kesselman, Canada's Research Chair in Public Finance at the School of Public Policy at Simon Fraser University wrote in *The Globe and Mail*:

—the historical record is that the CPP premium rate hikes initiated in the 1990s to restore financial balance did not hamper an economic expansion. Between 1997 and 2003 CPP premiums were hiked 70 per cent while the country's employment rate rose strongly and steadily except for a slight dip with the 2001 economic downturn.

Things were fine, in other words, and it did not have an economic increase.

Professor Kesselman also makes clear that the employer's CPP premium is not, as the government terms it, a “payroll tax”. He has written an award-winning book on payroll taxes and he concludes that taxes come from consolidated revenue. Premiums for CPP, of course, come from employer and employee contributions.

As a recent *Globe and Mail* editorial put it:

Since the proposed CPP premium hikes would provide workers correspondingly higher benefits in retirement, they are not like an ordinary payroll tax increase. Rather, they are like an individual's payment for improved insurance coverage. This premium-benefit linkage means that CPP premiums lack the disincentive effects of most taxes.

He goes on to say, “Concern over the effects of CPP premium hikes is unwarranted and should not be allowed to block this important policy reform any longer”.

In addition, even if the finance ministers agreed next week to enhance the CPP, it would not come into effect until at least 2016 anyway. The government keeps telling us the economy is going to get better, which should therefore be another reason to go ahead and not delay this important reform any further.

Business of Supply

The second argument the government and others have used is that it should be a voluntary and not a mandatory program increase.

How can people be expected to voluntarily save when Canadians already have the highest household debt rate in history? To suggest people should voluntarily save, and that will do the trick, ignores the reality that most working people and an increasingly large number of middle-class Canadians as well are not able to save.

The money must be there when people reach retirement. Therefore, why take a chance on a voluntary program? As I have said before, only a minority of workers have RPPs, RRSPs, or any savings. What is going to happen to the majority?

By way of conclusion, if the government opposes this motion, it has to tell Canadians what it intends to do instead. If the Liberals and the Conservatives say that a voluntary program is just fine, they have to explain how that will actually help young Canadians who cannot save.

Last December, the Minister of Finance said that he and the provincial finance ministers, “had agreed on a way forward on increasing CPP and Quebec pension plan benefits”. Unfortunately, he seems to have changed his tune.

We need a plan for the future of Canadians and our economy. We strongly urge the government to stop standing in the way, work with the provinces and immediately begin phasing in an increase to the CPP and QPP. The time to act is now.

• (1220)

Mr. Erin O’Toole (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my friend and I joined the House in the same by-elections and it is a privilege to hear him opine on this issue.

I will make careful note that he is in firm agreement with *The Globe and Mail* editorial board, so I will look to it for further concurrence in the future.

My question is based on my long drive into Ottawa this morning on the tricky roads. I listened to the head of the Ontario teachers’ pension plan, Jim Leech, talk about pensions and CPP. In terms of CPP reform, he said that it should come in the next 10 years at some point.

The big thing we have to look at is the current economic climate. Can employers afford to do this on the immediate timeline the member is suggesting when there are still a lot of Canadians unemployed or underemployed? We want to ensure the jobs are there first.

I would ask the member to speak to the timing. Should this not be a consultative process of reform over the next few years?

Mr. Murray Rankin: Mr. Speaker, as my hon. friend said, we came to this place at the same time and it is a pleasure to be engaging in this important debate. I am pleased that *The Globe and Mail* is on our side and I think on the side of history.

It is troubling to me that the Minister of Finance apparently said a few years ago that we needed to get on with it, but only when the economy is ready. I have never heard the government define what “ready” is. Is it a GDP increase of 3%, 2%, 5%?

It seems to be that one or two lobby groups have said that they do not want to proceed. As I would describe, the number of pennies that this will cost in the future is quite marginal to do the right thing by Canadians. He asked if we can afford it. I ask how he can afford not to help a new generation in its retirement years. We have to act now for them.

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I commend the hon. member for his motion, which the Liberals will support because we believe this is a quintessentially middle-class issue and we are in full support in principle, if not in detail.

However, I do have one question. It struck me as strange, or perhaps one could say quintessentially federal NDP, that the motion calls for an increase in CPP benefits, but there is no mention of increased premiums.

Does the NDP believe we can have increased benefits and the money for the premiums will fall from the sky, or is this a clerical omission? Why does the NDP call for increased benefits with no mention of the need for corresponding increases to premiums?

Mr. Murray Rankin: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate very much the support of the Liberals for the motion today, the third party.

We acknowledge that there must be an increase in premiums and there are two or three plans on the table. In fact, there are many. There is one that the CLC has brought forward. There is another that comes from the provinces. They each define in great detail just what the shared increase would be.

It is a program funded by premiums of employers and employees alike. For example, one plan of the CLC would be to double benefits by increasing premiums by 0.43% of pensionable earnings for each of seven years. For a worker making the average salary of \$51,000 a year, the initial cost of doubling future benefits works out to about 10¢ an hour, or \$4 a week. That is about the cost of a couple of cups of coffee.

The provincial plan, provided by Mr. Sheridan of Prince Edward Island, has a different scheme and would increase it to help more middle-class people by a wedge process, which would allow higher premiums and higher payments therefore among workers with more money. They have costed that out at less than \$2 a week, and in exchange, additional pension benefits of \$3,000 a year.

In other words, the premiums would be modest and this is the right thing to do for Canadians now.

• (1225)

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise after my colleague from Victoria, whom I would like to acknowledge and thank today for introducing a motion on a very important subject.

This motion is extremely important because it is being widely discussed, but rarely in the House. Since being elected in 2011, this government has implemented a number of initiatives—the TFSA was created before 2011—as well as private registered pension plans. However, the pension solutions proposed by the government are always individual solutions, much like RRSPs.

In contrast, we are now facing a collective problem. Some people save the full amount allowed for TFSAs or maximize RRSP contributions. Generally, it can be assumed that they are interested in building some security for retirement in their old age. They also have the means to do so, and have been more financially active in their lives.

However, it is much more difficult for the middle class and people who are less fortunate to make long-term and retirement plans. Indeed, they often have day-to-day concerns that force them to deal with their reality today before they can think about retirement. It is clear to me, to my colleague and to this side of the House that the Canada pension plan is the best vehicle to provide security in retirement. We can also include other government initiatives, such as old age security or the guaranteed income supplement, but the Canada pension plan was established more than 40—almost 50—years ago, and has proven itself. It is a portable system with extremely low administrative costs.

If someone has a pension plan in a certain company and then changes companies, the plan does not follow, unless that person goes through a whole bureaucratic process to allow for that. However, the Canada pension plan, and of course its counterpart, the Quebec pension plan, are portable and safe. In 2012, the Department of Finance itself specified in its report—and this was actually confirmed by the chief actuary of the Canada pension plan—that the system is safe for 75 years due to adequate contribution rates, and will even perform well in a future environment with greater demographic pressures. This is expected to happen over the next 15 or 20 years.

The plan is stable. We have an excellent plan, so why not make it better, and not just for people likely to fall below the poverty line when they retire? I know that we have old age security and the guaranteed income supplement to cover the bare minimum and help people who really need income after they retire.

The Canada pension plan can give them the means to be more comfortable in retirement. Of course, these people are encouraged to save up for retirement on their own, but in many cases, that is not possible or desirable for them. Right now, not even 40% of Canadians have additional retirement savings through their employer or independently.

It is extremely important to look at the various options. With all due respect to my colleague from Markham—Unionville, the motion does not mention specific accounting aspects. It does not mention contribution levels or benefit levels because we want the House to agree on the principle that the Canada pension plan—and the Quebec pension plan, we hope—should be able to accommodate the growing need for a secure retirement.

There are other elements in addition to contributions. We can also talk about the existing contribution limit. Contributions are withheld

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from earnings ranging from \$3,500 to about \$51,000. In the United States, contributions are withheld from income up to \$113,000 U.S. We should think about where income comes from. We know that it will take income or at least contributions or parameters like these to cover higher benefits in the future.

When financial planners recommend adequate retirement income, they say that between 60% and 80% of average income earned during a person's working life should be enough to cover the cost of retirement.

● (1230)

Right now, the Canada pension plan covers about 25%. Some other models and proposals suggest increasing benefits to cover 35%.

We know that the Canada pension plan will not cover 60%, 70% or 80% of a person's working income, but if we can increase it by 10%, that alone would make a big difference. Once again, it would make a big difference for all Canadians, not just the poorest and those who end up struggling once they retire, but also for the middle class and even the upper middle class.

In that sense, it is incredibly important to debate this issue now. There have been meetings of finance ministers. Even before the 2011 election, I followed the meetings that took place in 2009 and 2010, which dealt with critical and fundamental issues. I believe that at the December 2010 meeting, almost all the provinces and territories agreed to expand the Canada pension plan. Since I know people who were involved in the process, I know that at the last minute, the federal government intervened to convince certain provinces to withdraw from the plan. In the end, the government proposed its registered pension plans for companies.

These solutions may be adequate in the short term and under very specific circumstances. However, what we are currently trying to do is to provide the broadest possible coverage and ensure that the Canada pension plan is as useful as possible to as many people as possible.

I have heard the arguments coming from the House and organizations on the economic aspect. People are saying that this is not the right time. The Minister of Finance has said this repeatedly. He is saying that expanding the CPP will reduce growth. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business, among others, has expressed its concerns and reservations about the potential increase in premiums, which could lead to an increase in benefits.

This assessment is always done looking at only one side of the equation. People are always talking about the impact an increase in premiums would have on employers and employees. However, they do not consider the impact of being able to put more money into the pockets of people who will often invest directly in the economy.

Business of Supply

As a general rule, retirees are no longer saving for their retirement. Those who had the opportunity to buy a home have already paid for it in full. The government would therefore be providing additional benefits that would, once again, often help the middle and lower classes. Overall, people will spend that money, which will boost the economy. The increase in premiums would not jeopardize small and medium-sized businesses and the business world by taking money away from them. On the contrary, it would result in more investments in the economy. This is one way to more effectively oil the economic machine.

As a result, I did not hesitate for a moment in supporting the motion by my colleague from Victoria, because we need to talk about this motion. It needs solid support in the House.

Since this discussion started, I have seen some positive signs from the Conservative Party and the Liberal Party. I hope they will be able to see for themselves the benefits, not only for Canada but for all savers and ultimately our retirees, of reaching unanimous agreement on this subject.

That will send a message not only to the Canadian government, but also to all the provinces and to their finance ministers who will be meeting on this issue, that we have to find a solution.

The federal government cannot make the decision alone. It needs the consent of many of the provinces and a large part of the population. If the House can send that clear and unambiguous message to the provinces and the federal government, they will be much more likely to reach an agreement that, in the long term, will benefit all Canadians and all Quebecers, assuming that Quebec would do likewise with the Quebec pension plan.

Depending on the principles used, this would also be an inexpensive way to stabilize the economy. As my colleague mentioned, he has several options on the table. We need an agreement on what direction to take. Then we can leave it up to the provinces and the federal government to determine the best way to carry this out. We hope to be involved in that process.

•(1235)

[*English*]

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it used to be that one could leave school, get a job, work at the same company for one's entire working career, and retire with a workplace pension. Of course, the situation today is not that way at all, particularly for young people, and particularly for young people in big cities, where the cost of living and the cost of housing are so incredibly expensive.

Young people do not generally think about their pensions when they are young. That is why we are debating this today, because if we do not get this right today, we are relegating an entire generation of Canadian young people to a life of poverty in their senior years.

I would like my hon. colleague to spend a bit of time talking particularly about the importance of this for young people today.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question, which is very timely indeed.

There are several reasons why young people do not think about retirement. It may be because the subject does not interest them at

the moment or because they do not have the means to do so. In our country, approximately 40% of all Canadians in the private sector contribute to a registered pension plan. This percentage falls to less than 30% for young people between the ages of 25 and 29.

Indeed, young people are not able to contribute for various reasons. They may not see the need to contribute now for the long term because retirement is too far away. Furthermore, they may also lack the financial ability to do so. In addition to their employment income, which is often lower for youth, we also have to consider their ability to set money aside from their wages after paying for a house, a car or other expenses.

The question is therefore extremely relevant because the current savings rate of young people is a major concern. In many cases, a measure like this one could help ensure their retirement security in 25, 30, 40 or 50 years.

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his remarks. As always, he is well informed. I would also like to comment on a point that he raised.

It is true that the youth savings rate is alarming. However, we must also recognize that there are young people who are concerned about their retirement and are seriously wondering how to save for a secure retirement.

All we hear these days is that nothing is certain anymore and that we can no longer plan for something 30 years down the road. Young people such as myself who want to put money away for a good retirement hear that the performance of RRSPs is not up to expectations and that those who counted on RRSPs are very disappointed now. In addition, they see that employer pension plans are either falling apart or providing much lower benefits.

For young people who want to plan for their retirement and who are giving it some serious thought, could my colleague explain why the Canada pension plan is secure compared to all the other options available? Also, how could this plan be enhanced, given that it is already in place and it seems to be the most effective?

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, the Canada pension plan is indeed very secure. The returns are great and the administrative costs are very low.

If people invest in an RRSP with a return of 3% or 3.5% every year and administrative costs of 2%, the actual return will be 1% or 1.5%. I think it is very important to realize how useful the Canada pension plan is. The plan is also very attractive because it offers defined benefits compared to private options such as RRSPs. As a result, when we retire, we will know what we are entitled to, and the income will be constant.

Business of Supply

RRSPs and initiatives such as the government's pooled registered pension plan are defined contribution plans. People know how much they are putting in the plan, but they never know how much they will ultimately get in return, because that depends on what happens with the economy. The fact that CPP is a defined benefit plan rather than a defined contribution plan enhances its economic security.

• (1240)

[English]

Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a real pleasure to rise in the House. I want to thank the NDP for choosing to discuss pensions on its opposition day today. We often see NDP members focusing on topics that make little difference to Canadians. I am glad they have finally come forward with a topic that does matter.

As we all know, personal financial security in Canada is directly connected to the economy. For eight consecutive years, our government has demonstrated steadfast leadership, under the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance, and an unprecedented commitment to the Canadian economy.

Creating jobs and securing economic growth have remained our government's top priorities. Our government, prior to the global downturn, tackled debt. It paid down just under \$40 billion in national debt. The government has cut spending. We have made the right economic choices. I am pleased to announce that all Canadians are benefiting from them today.

Since the depths of the recession in 2009, over one million net new jobs have been created. Nearly 90% of those million new jobs are full-time jobs, and more than 80% of those jobs are in the private sector. In fact, Statistics Canada recently announced that the Canadian economy grew by 2.7% in the third quarter of this year. This represents the ninth consecutive quarter in which we have seen economic growth in Canada.

What is more, last week, Statistics Canada announced that over 21,000 net new jobs were created in the month of November. That includes solid gains in the manufacturing sector. I know that all Canadians understand that when we see new jobs being created in the manufacturing sector, there is a level of confidence there.

The unemployment rate has remained at 6.9%, the lowest level since 2008. This modest economic growth demonstrates that our economic action plan is working. By making sound economic choices, Canada is doing relatively well where others have faltered.

However, we cannot be complacent. That is why we continue to deliver on our commitment to Canadians while keeping taxes low. After all, two and a half years ago, when Canadians elected our Conservative government to a majority government position, they were clear. Canadians knew that they could not pay the higher taxes the Liberals and the NDP wanted to force upon them.

Unfortunately, the NDP leader, again, just recently, committed to raising taxes. He is adamant about imposing higher taxes on job creators, which would stunt Canada's economic growth. Those taxes would prevent businesses from expanding and would block them from hiring workers. Small businesses, in particular, cannot afford those higher-tax policies.

In fact, families in my riding and across Canada tell me that they cannot afford an irresponsible pension plan either. They cannot afford increased payroll taxes, or deductions, as they are called. They cannot afford a smaller paycheque. They also tell us that with house payments and all the responsibilities they have raising families, they cannot afford to lose their jobs. They simply cannot afford the costly expansion of the Canada pension plan the NDP is suggesting. It would take more money out of the pockets of Canadians and would force employers to cut jobs, hours, and wages. Those are not just the comments of the government. Those are comments from the job creators.

The costs of the NDP plan to increase Canada's pension plan during a fragile global recovery is not responsible. On this side of the House, we share the concerns of employees. We share the concerns of small business, and we share the concerns of many of the provinces in regard to increasing costs during a fragile global recovery.

Canadian families are working hard to build our economy, and we are committed to supporting them. When disaster struck the world economy, our government took immediate action.

• (1245)

The Conservatives navigated Canada through some of the most turbulent times in a generation. The results are clear: Canada, again, is doing relatively well. However, Canada faces global economic risks that are outside of our control. For example, global demand has softened and the prices of some of Canada's exports, particularly resources, are down.

We tend to dwell far too much on only oil and gas, but our base metals, for example, have declined over the spring and summer on expectations of a slowing Chinese economy. Canadian forestry production has also faced price declines from a still weak U.S. housing sector and higher North American production. While Canadian crude prices have improved somewhat since budget 2013, it continues to sell at a larger than normal discount.

The debt crisis in Europe continues to weigh on consumer and business confidence. The Euro area has emerged from a recession of a year and a half. However, growth for this new trading partner, new in the sense that we now have a trade agreement, is still very weak. Moreover, striking disparities remain within that region. Germany, for example, continues to show a modest pace and growth. Spain and the Netherlands have turned slightly positive in the third quarter. In contrast, France posted negative real GDP growth while Italy remains in a recession.

Business of Supply

Closer to home, a slow recovery in the U.S., as well as uncertainty surrounding the sustainability of the country's finances, poses the greatest risk to the Canadian economy.

The International Monetary Fund's outlook for real GDP growth in 2013, in both advanced and emerging economies, is 1.2% down from the previous projection of 1.4%. Despite the fragile global economic environment, the NDP is trying to force its risky Canada pension plan on Canadians today.

The NDP has proposed a radical plan to increase payroll tax, which would undoubtedly stunt our economic growth. In fact, Finance Canada officials estimate that the NDP plan would kill up to 70,000 jobs. On average, contribution rates would increase by more than \$1,600 per year. A family with up to two workers could be forced to pay as much as \$2,600 more every year.

The NDP would increase CPP costs for all Canadian workers, even those who at the current time are struggling to make ends meet. The NDP's plan would send thousands of workers to the unemployment lines and would definitely endanger economic growth. Other proposals to expand CPP payroll deductions, while slightly more modest, would also harm Canada's fragile economy. One recent provincial proposal, according to Finance Canada, would threaten and could kill between 17,000 and 50,000 jobs.

Members do not have to take my word for it. Norma Kozhaya, research director and chief economist of the Quebec Employers Council said:

The proposal of enhancing the QPP/ CPP that has been put forth in recent weeks... runs the risk of having adverse effects on economic activity, investments, jobs and salaries, all of which would go against the federal government's announced objective of maximizing job creation.

She is right.

C.D. Howe Institute's president and CEO, William Robson, said:

...the bigger Canada Pension Plan many unions and provinces are pushing is a bad response. Durable pension improvements for people currently working must rest on more saving by those same people. Instead, "Big CPP" threatens another wealth grab...

Bill Tufts, founder and director of Fair Pensions for All said:

An enhancement of the CPP will be a significant drain on investment capital, at a time when the public sector unions, and even the Bank of Canada, are calling for business to come off the sidelines and kick start our economy. Expanding the CPP now will have the opposite effect.

● (1250)

I could go on all day because Canadians are lining up to oppose this NDP plan. They do not want to see the progress we have made being reversed by irresponsible strategies and plans.

The fact of the matter is that any benefit that these proposals could have years or decades down the road must be weighed against the immediate economic damage. Let me say that again. Any benefit that these proposals could have years or decades down the road must be weighed today on the immediate economic damage that it would cause.

We must comprehensively study the effects on families. What would the effect be on business? What would the effect be on communities? Not only do we need more study on the effects of CPP

expansion, but to make major changes we need support from the provinces.

Contrary to what the NDP asked in a question last week, there is no consensus on CPP expansion. For example, let me quote from the British Columbia finance department, the province where the hon. member comes from:

B.C. believes pension reform should not be undertaken before the economy has recovered from the impacts of the recent recession.

The New Brunswick government has expressed its opposition as well. Last month, New Brunswick finance minister said:

We don't think it is the right time to put on additional costs to business owners and employees.

What we are debating today is about additional costs to employees, who, for example, may have both partners in a home working to make a house payment, working to put the kids through hockey and piano.

Most of these finance departments and finance ministers have said that we cannot afford the additional costs today. Let me be clear, and this is why I commended the NDP for bringing this motion forward, we all want a stronger retirement system. However, we cannot move forward with a system that can have negative effects during this time of a fragile economy. An expansion at this time would mean job cuts, reduced working hours or a drop in wages.

Laura Jones, executive vice-president, Canadian Federation of Independent Business said:

A mandatory CPP increase...is a bad idea. An increase in the CPP tax takes more money out of the employees' and employers' pockets. Where will this money come from? Employees may be tempted to lower contributions to their RRSPs, or reduce their mortgage payments. [...] Worse still, small businesses report that a mandatory CPP increase would force many to lower wages and even reduce their workforce.

A recent survey about CPP increases by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, whose membership, I think, is around 110,000 employers, businesses, across this country, was that 65% of businesses said they would freeze or cut salaries if CPP payroll taxes were increased, and 48% said they would reduce investments in their business.

We know that in a struggling economy where we are also trying to improve productivity, we want businesses to reinvest in their businesses. We know that is going to help with job creation. However, 48% said they would reduce investments in their business. More important, and perhaps the scariest statistic, is that 42% said they would decrease the number of employees. This is a high cost. It is an extremely high cost, especially given the fragile global economy.

Instead, our government is working with a prudent and responsible plan. We will not rush an expansion that carries serious economic consequences. Some of them may well be unintended consequences, but they will be consequences nevertheless. We will continue to work to identify all possible factors that may help us better understand the opportunities and risks of an expanded CPP.

● (1255)

Garth Whyte, who is the president and CEO of Canadian Restaurant and Foodservices Association, said:

Business of Supply

The restaurant industry is one of the country's largest employers and the number one place where Canadians get their first-job experience... Increasing CPP premiums puts these opportunities at risk. There are better options to address concerns about retirement income for middle and higher income earners.

As we can see, this is a complex matter with real world consequences for Canadians. We must first fully understand the economic environment in which an expansion would be implemented. In addition to risks posed to families and job creators, we feel that all governments, both federal and provincial, should first focus on ensuring that their financial houses are in order.

We recognize that some households may be at risk of not saving enough for retirement. That is why we want to make it easier for individuals to save for their own retirement. For instance, our government introduced the tax-free savings account. It provides additional tax efficient savings opportunities to Canadians of up to \$5,500 annually. As we are into this season of prebudget consultations and meeting with Canadians all across the country, I receive thanks for tax-free savings accounts at every meeting. People are stepping forward and asking us to perhaps enhance it, but certainly they are thanking us for this opportunity to save. Because we have introduced the tax-free savings account, more than 8 million Canadians are now saving tax free.

This is just one of the many steps we have taken to ensure that seniors and pensioners continue to have more money in their pockets. We want to ensure that when we go into the senior years—and for those seniors who are there already—we have the quality of life that we have worked a lifetime to achieve.

We have not stopped with tax-free savings accounts. We have also introduced pension income splitting. After taxes had been filed and a number of seniors came from their accountants, they realized the importance of the pension income splitting.

We have doubled the maximum income eligible for pension income credit. We increased the maximum GIS earnings exemption to \$3,500. We increased the age credit by \$1,000 in 2006, and another \$1,000 in 2009. We increased the age limit for maturing pensions and RRSPs to 71 from 69 years of age. Overall, our government's prudent responsible action is delivering over \$2.7 billion in tax relief to our seniors.

Let me outline how the concrete actions we have taken since 2006 are helping everyday Canadian seniors. A senior couple making \$55,000 and \$25,000 respectively in pension income are expected to pay \$2,260 less in personal income tax. This includes about \$700 that they have saved by taking advantage of pension income splitting, and about \$960 from the doubling of the pension income credit and the increase in the age credit. They also pay \$740 less because of our GST cut. This adds up to a total of \$3,000 in tax relief for 2013.

Our party's legislation to protect Canadian seniors has helped to ensure consistently tough penalties for crimes involving elder abuse. I could go on and on about the many things we have done.

We have moved on financial literacy across the country. In November, I had the privilege of meeting many seniors, and also many others who are involved in the delivery of financial literacy programs. Certainly the seniors aspect is one that our minister of seniors and others have taken up, ensuring that seniors have the

ability to understand complex financial markets and the things they need to better guarantee their quality of life.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on and on, but I see you are telling me that my time is up. Let me again thank you for the privilege of being able to speak here today. Canadians can count on this side of the House staying focused on the economy. After all, it is difficult to plan for a healthy retirement if someone does not have a job, and much of what the opposition parties would bring forward as far as CPP reform would mean that many Canadians would not have a job today.

● (1300)

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, the Minister of State for finance, for his speech in this House.

He says that there would be dire economic consequences to our employment rates if we were to proceed and he cites a couple of reports from departments that we have not been shown. However, the evidence from the Canada Research Chair in Public Finance, Mr. Rhys Kesselman, who wrote this on November 8 in *The Globe and Mail*, would appear to be the contrary:

...the historical record is that the CPP premium rate hikes initiated in the 1990s... did not hamper an economic expansion. Between 1997 and 2003 CPP premiums were hiked 70 per cent while the employment rate rose strongly and steadily except for a slight dip with the 2001 downturn.

How is it that this historical evidence can be squared with these predictions of trade groups and the department? If the minister says Canada cannot do it now, just when can we do it?

Mr. Kevin Sorenson: Mr. Speaker, I wonder exactly where the NDP is coming from when on one hand it is talking about increased premiums and on the other hand it is talking about ensuring that Canadians will have so much more in CPP. We know that the NDP believes that government can fix all societal problems and this would just be the normal way to do it, but I wonder what consequences that member believes would have to be faced if the CPP was increased.

For example, would people have to make the choice with the loss of up to \$2,600 in the household each year? What choices would they make? Would they choose to not make that house payment? Would they choose not to save in the RRSP?

We know that not just the finance departments but 42% of business groups have said that they would have to lay employees off. Whether it is the 50,000 that finance departments said or up to 70,000 job losses with the NDP plan, our focus for the last years that we have been in power has been job creation, and we will not compromise that strategy when it is working.

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I notice the minister did not answer the last question. Maybe I will have better luck.

Business of Supply

There was an article in *The Globe and Mail* this morning in which the minister is said to have promised that he would provide the details of an analysis that his department did in order to talk about the alleged loss of jobs from CPP premium increases. However, according to the article,

The department did not provide its full analysis. Instead, it provided a six-paragraph statement that the department has done modelling “using a range of assumptions and models” to assess the impact of higher CPP premiums.

That is no answer. Anyone can dream up any number. If we do not have the analysis backing it, how do we know what is true and what is not true?

My question for the minister is whether he will provide solid analysis, not just a few short paragraphs, to back up his claims.

Also, I would wonder why he is talking about the impact of a doubling of the CPP. I know the NDP has talked about that, but that is not what is on the table. That is not the provincial motion that the government rejected. Why is he scaremongering by talking about proposals that are not even on the table?

Mr. Kevin Sorenson: Mr. Speaker, we are working with the provinces. Much of what has been developed by departments has been shared with the provinces. Certainly we are working with the provinces, and next week we will meet with the finance ministers. We will sit down and discuss the economy and a number of issues—many issues, actually. One of them will be the CPP, which has been carried quite extensively over the last three weeks by the media.

We can take the numbers from the job creators and the businesses that have said that 42% will be laying off workers. Departments have said that under the NDP plan, up to 70,000 jobs will be lost. That is straight from Finance Canada. They have also talked about other provincial plans, whereby between 17,000 and 50,000 jobs would be lost. Those are not figures we alone are citing; those are the figures cited by finance departments.

Regardless of the number, I have had constituents and Canadians come up to me to say, “Mr. Sorenson, we are on a tight budget now. We cannot afford to have one of the two of us laid off. We need to be certain that we keep this economy rolling.”

What I do know is that two years down the road I do not want to stand in this place scratching my head and wondering why, if we went five years on a strategy that helped create jobs and prosperity and put Canada in the best position of any of the countries in the G7, we then changed and took action that caused this huge increase in unemployment?

We have a strategy that is working, a Prime Minister who is focused on the economy, and a Minister of Finance who understands the economy. The plan is working. We look forward to continuing to create jobs. We will not bring forward risky strategies that will hurt our economy.

• (1305)

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his great presentation today. As he pointed out, it seems that the only solution the New Democrats can come up with is more government and bigger government.

I would ask the member to talk a bit about the impact of the increases the NDP is suggesting. He is from Alberta. He has not had to live under the pressures that an NDP government can bring. Every place that it has come to government in Canada has ended up with a disaster. Either it has completely ruined the economy in the short term or, as in the case of Saskatchewan, it has left us so far behind Alberta that it is only now, in the last 10 years, that we are beginning to catch up.

The member noted that this proposal will cost approximately \$2,600. We have talked about the fact that through our tax cuts, Canadians families are being saved about \$3,000 per year. He talked about how seniors have been impacted and are benefiting from it. I wonder if he could talk about how one proposal by the NDP amidst a whole pile of them would take away all of that advantage at one time, and talk as well about the impact on jobs.

Mr. Kevin Sorenson: Mr. Speaker, the member is right that everywhere the NDP has been in power it has been for a fairly short term, because it has totally annihilated the economy of the province or wherever it has been. There is very little credibility there.

To be clear, when I quoted the \$2,600, I was quoting for a two-income family. That is not per worker. It is for both.

I have the privilege of living in a province that has always talked about the Alberta advantage. Many years ago when Stockwell Day was the treasurer, the idea was to have a low corporate income tax rate and low personal income taxes, making sure that even with no provincial sales tax, we were sending out the message that this was the place we wanted businesses to come to.

We want to attract business. We want to attract opportunities. We want to attract opportunities for young families. We want people to come here in hopes of prospering, getting a job, and raising a family in a place where they can realize those dreams. That is what we have when we have an advantage. Globally, people are standing back and saying that there is an advantage to doing business in Canada when they see the tax rates, the opportunities, and the plan that is set in place.

I was raised in Alberta. I moved to Saskatchewan for a very short period of time and then moved back to Alberta. Many of my friends in Alberta are from Saskatchewan. Many are now moving back to Saskatchewan, because they see opportunity again. They see a government that is very pro-job creation.

We are focused. We will not stand in front of a mike and talk about the \$3,200 more in each pocket that Canadians have and then in another measure turn around and give it all away.

• (1310)

[*Translation*]

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to speak to the NDP motion.

Business of Supply

As I said before, the Liberal Party will be supporting this motion. We feel that the issue of whether pensions are adequate for Canadians now and whether they will be in the future is a huge challenge for Canadians and for the middle class in particular.

Everyone knows that our leader, the member for Papineau, is focusing on issues facing the middle class. Given that this is a huge challenge for the middle class, we are very supportive of the principle of this motion. We will vote in favour of it, although we do not completely agree with the NDP about the details.

I would like to begin my speech by explaining why this is a major challenge and what economic factors suggest that to be the case. Then, I want to talk about the policies of the NDP, the Conservatives and the Liberal Party. I would say that we take a centrist position, which falls in between the other two parties' extremes.

[English]

First, let us ask why the pension issue is such a huge challenge for Canadians in general and middle-class Canadians in particular. There are a number of reasons, and many of us have heard them before, so I can be relatively brief.

There was a recent CIBC study saying that the average 35-year-old today saves only half as much as that same 35-year-old would have saved a generation ago. That is fairly dramatic evidence of inadequate savings.

We know as well that only some 25% of Canadians who work in the private sector have access to workplace retirement savings plans. We know as well that the Canadian Institute of Actuaries did a study, and they reported that among middle-class Canadians earning \$30,000 to \$100,000 who planned to retire within 10 years, only one-third of all of those millions of people will have retirement income sufficient to meet basic needs.

Finally, I will mention a report by CARP, the Canadian Association of Retired Persons. CARP surveyed its members to ask whether they felt that they would be comfortable in their retirement. In 2009, 30% of the respondents said they would feel comfortable. That is not a huge number, but 30% said yes.

Over the four years following, from 2009 to 2013, that number fell from 30% to 14%. Only 14% of CARP members today feel that they will be comfortable in their retirement years. Notice that the drop from 30% to 14% occurred during the period when the Conservatives were promoting their pooled retirement pension plan. It also came at a time of economic crisis in this country.

The pension challenge is compounded by record low interest rates, which we have had for many years and which some think will continue into the future. It is compounded by the aging population, by the fact that Canadians are living longer, and for other reasons. The pension issue is more important and more challenging today than it has been in the past, and it is evident from what I am saying that I do not think the Conservatives are providing any answers to this pressing problem.

The Liberal position is that we regard this as a major challenge. Our position is to take what I would call strong but sensible action to address the pension issue. I want to address very briefly what we would do, but I want to have a little bit of a caveat. That is because

we have our party policy convention in a couple of months, so what I am about to say is not necessarily the final word. Going forward we will have consultations with Canadians at our convention, but what I am outlining now has been the Liberal position for some time, and as of today it remains so.

•(1315)

First, we will certainly not agree to increase the age for old age security from 65 to 67, and there is no doubt in my mind that position will not change. Second, traditionally we have supported a moderate increase in the regular Canada pension plan, not unlike what is being discussed now by premiers and what has just been rejected by the federal government. Third, we have been on record as supporting a supplementary voluntary Canada pension plan, but subject to what is called "auto-enrolment", which would supplement the existing Canada pension plan.

I will come back to those positions in more detail, but in broad strokes that is the Liberal position. Let me begin by comparing it with the positions of the NDP and the Conservatives.

The contrast between the New Democrats and the Liberals reminds me a bit of a topic familiar to those in the House. That is the situation involving Senator Gerstein and Senator Mike Duffy. Those two senators turned out to be in agreement with each other on principle, but they differed on the quantum. By that I mean that they both agreed that it was okay to use Conservative Party funds, part of which were paid for by taxpayers, to make Senator Duffy whole. That was okay in principle, but they disagreed on the quantum. For Senator Gerstein, \$30,000 was his upper limit, whereas Senator Duffy wanted \$90,000 and that is where they disagreed.

The issue we are talking about today is certainly legal and it is perhaps even noble; that is to say it has nothing to do with the Senate but everything to do with the adequacy of Canadians' future pensions. It is fair to say that Liberals and New Democrats agree on the principle, but not necessarily the quantum. We agree that strong action must be taken, that we are facing a huge challenge, but we do not necessarily agree with the NDP proposition that we have to double the Canada pension plan.

We know that originally comes from the Canadian Labour Congress. We are respectful of that idea and we have had discussions with them. However, we think that doubling may be excessive in terms of quantum from the point of view that we know ordinary Canadians are hard-pressed. If they are so hard-pressed with record debt, can they really afford to double their CPP premiums? Second, for companies we know that the job situation is pressing. Can we really afford to ask those companies to pay radically higher premiums?

That is a question of quantum not a question of principle, but we have differences with the NDP on that issue of quantity, if not on issues of principle.

Business of Supply

However, where we really differ is with the Conservatives because essentially their policy is to be missing in action on pensions, or if one wants to be charitable, it is a policy of benign neglect. The reason I say I am being charitable is that I am not sure if the word “benign” is appropriate, but certainly “neglect” is appropriate. The position of the Conservatives is well summarized in an editorial in *The Globe and Mail* that appeared yesterday evening, of which I will read part:

Ottawa's move last week to flatly reject a provincial pitch to expand the Canada Pension Plan is an unfortunate decision. The federal government is still choosing to back a far less effective retirement savings program.

The Globe and Mail goes on to say:

...PEI Finance Minister Wes Sheridan said last week that the...government could have at the very least countered with a more modest reform as a compromise. Ottawa's blanket rejection suggests that it never had any serious intention to back the idea.

That is 100% right. I believe that the Minister of Finance is on record as being willing to countenance a moderate increase in CPP pensions, but he was overruled by his boss, the Prime Minister, who as of today, I believe, is still the boss. The Prime Minister is on record over many years as not only opposing CPP moderate hikes today, but opposing the CPP in general.

In one statement, he said that the CPP is a “fictitious obligation that the government can change down the road”. In a second comment, he talked about Mr. Martin's exercise to reform the CPP as “bogus”, to the extent that the investment board fails to function like a private-sector fund manager, it will be inefficient, increasing the likelihood of further CPP premium increases.

● (1320)

Then the Prime Minister stated, “But if [the CPP] succeeds in operating 'just like the private sector'...then there's no real reason for government to run it at all.” In other words, he does not like the Canada pension plan, so I believe that as long as he is the Prime Minister of this country, no time will be the right time for any infinitesimal increase in CPP premiums and benefits. That is precisely the point, which *The Globe and Mail* attacked yesterday.

The Globe and Mail and others have also attacked the pooled registered pension plans as being entirely inadequate to the job. Let me again quote from *The Globe and Mail*:

Canada's experience with RRSPs illustrates why another voluntary savings program is not as appealing an option as an expanded CPP. RRSPs have long provided a tax-effective way to save for retirement, yet three out of four eligible tax filers did not contribute one cent into their RRSPs in 2010. Canadians are already sitting on \$633-billion of unused RRSP contribution room, and that figure keeps climbing.

That was in *The Globe and Mail*. The PRPP is essentially a glorified group RRSP. With only one in four Canadians availing themselves of RRSPs, why do the Conservatives think the take-up will be significant for their new plan?

A second problem is that it is costly. The CPP cost is far lower than the private sector cost and one of Canada's leading pension experts, Keith Ambachtsheer, has done an analysis in which he shows that relatively small differences in the management costs can have enormous differences in the long-run value of the pension, differences on the order of 20% to 40% of the pension. Therefore, one other advantage of the CPP or the supplementary CPP over the

government's proposal is cost and that difference in cost can have a major impact on the long-run values of the pensions of middle-class Canadians. I have said in the past, let a thousand flowers bloom, let the private sector offer what it wants, let the supplementary CPP be offered, let Canadians choose, and out of that choice will come the best solution for Canadians.

Another piece of evidence that the government's plan is not working is that there has been very little take up by the provinces. I believe that three provinces have passed the legislation. Only one, Quebec, has so far implemented it, and provinces such as P.E.I. and Ontario would not be proceeding with planned reforms to the CPP if they truly believed that the Conservative government's solutions were adequate.

As I said, if we put all that together, Liberals believe that the government is totally missing in action on the pension issue, or if one wants to be more charitable, this has been a policy of benign neglect by the Conservatives. We believe that the Liberal plan, based on the three points I have mentioned, is the centrist position. These are active but sensible measures to address the pension issue, not the benign neglect of the Conservatives and not the more radical proposals of the NDP.

In my remaining time, I would like to outline very briefly the essence of the Liberal plan. There are three parts. One, as I have mentioned already, we would not—I repeat, not—raise the OAS age from 65 to 70. Actuaries have assured us that the plan is perfectly sustainable the way it is and the way in which the Conservatives are proposing to act would really hit the most vulnerable Canadians, particularly those who have been subject to hard physical work and are unable to work beyond 65. They would lose their OAS and GIS and be thrown onto provincial welfare. This is a totally unacceptable solution for this country.

● (1325)

Second, we want a combination of a moderate increase in the Canada pension plan, the regular plan, and a supplementary plan. We in the Liberal Party have long been proud of the Canada pension plan. It was brought into existence by Lester Pearson. It was radically strengthened by Paul Martin in the 1990s, to the point where it is now recognized as being solvent for 50 years, 75 years. It is one of the few national pension plans in the western world or even the whole world, that is solvent to such a degree. We can be proud of that, but needs have changed so we have to move on.

The needs of 2013 are not the same as they were in the mid-1960s. We have to expand some combination of the regular CPP and the supplementary CPP. We believe that for reasons of cost, CPP is very low cost. As I said earlier, that has a major impact on the value of Canadians' pensions because of the power of compound interest over time, and the supplementary CPP.

I want to talk about the supplementary CPP because it came under attack before the last election by the Conservatives who kind of made stuff up. Recently, a new plan that is being implemented in the United Kingdom called NEST provides further evidence and support to Liberal proposals.

Business of Supply

First of all, Conservatives made up numbers saying that the cost of our supplementary plan would be high for various specious reasons, which we said were wrong. We now know, based on the actual implementation of a very similar plan in Britain, that the actual cost of the plan is 50 basis points per year, or half a percentage point, which is a small fraction of the typical private sector costs and which would result in a substantially higher pension than the Conservatives would be providing under their plan. That is now a fact. It is not subject to argument; it is a fact.

The second point that is really important is that I said negative things about voluntary plans and that evidence from RRSPs suggested only a relatively small fraction of people would participate. However, the British have what they call “automatic enrolment” so that employees are automatically enrolled in the British plan called NEST, but they have the option of opting out if they so desire. I suppose there is a certain inertia in human affairs. It turns out that this automatic enrolment has a major impact on participation to the point where so far in the U.K., over 90% of employees remain in the plan and choose to participate. Yes, it is voluntary, but with this auto enrolment, the participation rate is very high.

[Translation]

To conclude, we will support the NDP motion. However, as far as the details are concerned, we feel that pensions are a huge challenge. The government is basically doing nothing, while the NDP is perhaps doing too much by wanting to double the pension plan. We are taking the middle road. Our plan consists of a number of elements. First, the age of eligibility for old age security benefits will remain at 65, not 67. Second, we will expand the Canada pension plan, both the regular plan and the supplementary one.

[English]

We think that this strong but sensible approach to addressing the pension challenge is the right way to go. Since the NDP is in principle on the same page, we in the Liberal Party are happy to support the motion.

Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to first make a comment before asking my Liberal friend a question. My hon. friend castigated the Conservatives from the last election for misrepresentations and I would appreciate it if he does not say that we are supporting a doubling. We have never said that. What we have said is that we are looking at a range of plans. We are committed to an increase, but please do not put words in our mouths.

Second, the finance critic for the Liberal Party only a few weeks ago said that no increase at all can be afforded. Therefore, is this a change over the last few weeks, especially since we heard in the speech that maybe the Liberal Party convention is only the point at which we are going to hear what your final position is? Are you indeed going to be voting with us and therefore is the Liberal Party changing its position?

• (1330)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Before I go to the member, I would remind this member and all others to refer their questions to the chair rather than to their colleagues.

The hon. member for Markham—Unionville.

Hon. John McCallum: Mr. Speaker, if the member is saying that it is not the policy of the NDP to double the CPP, then perhaps the gap between our two parties is less than I thought it was.

We have traditionally said, and said in the last election, that the Liberal position was open to a moderate increase in the CPP. That is what I am quoting.

We are still a long way from the election. We have not had our policy convention. We have not presented our platform. We will be consulting Canadians more. However, as to the most recent Liberal position, that is our position and that is what I have been citing today. If the member wants to get a more definitive, up-to-date answer, I suggest that he stay tuned for our upcoming policy convention, which will take place in February.

Our leader has said many times that he does not believe in a top-down approach to policy. He believes in listening to grassroots members and listening to Canadians across the country, and that is how we develop our policy.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his speech. I know that he has thought a lot about this issue and has some expertise on it.

I listened to the minister from the Conservative Party prattle on at great length about how this proposal would be killing jobs and killing the fragile economic recovery and that people cannot afford to put money away for retirement, even though it is perfectly obvious that we have not only a demographic crisis but a pension crisis in this country.

I would be interested in the opinion of the hon. member as to whether there is a scintilla of evidence to support the Conservative minister's position on its impact on jobs.

Hon. John McCallum: Mr. Speaker, my colleague's question is similar to the question I asked the minister, who had promised that he would provide evidence of his job estimates to the press and yet failed to do so, and he did not answer the question.

The short answer is that the minister has not provided a scintilla of evidence, because he has not provided the evidence he committed to provide.

I think it is a question of degree. The bigger the increase in the CPP benefits and premiums, the bigger the effect on hard-pressed Canadian households and companies that have to pay more premiums. However, the provinces are talking about implementation over five years, starting in 2016. Those increases are very moderate, but they have not been agreed to yet. I think increases on that scale are quite likely to be manageable.

Business of Supply

I also believe that sometimes the government forgets that the pension increases involve increased benefits as well as increased payments. Therefore, there is a benefit to the economy of the increased payments as well as a cost to the economy of the increased payments. Once we include both of those components, the net effect on these things might be quite negligible, if not totally unimportant.

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I agree with my colleague for Markham—Unionville, somewhat, in that he and I both listened to the same speech from the Minister of State (Finance).

I actually learned about the minister of state's wild, unsubstantiated claims about catastrophic job loss not from his speech in the House of Commons but from the website of Finance Canada. Posted on the Government of Canada website is what constitutes a viciously partisan political attack ad against the New Democratic Party, with a series of wild, unsubstantiated claims about hundreds of thousands of jobs being lost and essentially life as we know it coming to an end.

I would ask the member what he thinks of the Conservative government using government communication tools for partisan political promotion, as it were. Does he believe, as a former cabinet minister, that this crosses the ethical guidelines of non-partisanship the Government of Canada is obliged to conduct itself under?

• (1335)

Hon. John McCallum: Mr. Speaker, I wish I could shake with rage and outrage at this, but it has become a commonplace action by the Conservative government in many other departments where it has abused departmental websites. One cannot be shocked if one is shocked by the same kind of thing day in and day out.

To answer the member's question, I have not seen that particular website. However, I am shocked that the government would use official government websites in such a partisan way.

I am also if not shocked then displeased that in response to very clear questions about providing evidence, which he had promised in the media to do, the minister refused to address that question at all. If he will not provide evidence that he has promised to provide, one has to question the quality of that evidence, because if he had it, why would he not give it to us?

Hon. John McKay: Mr. Speaker, I would like to carry on the conversation about the evidence. The evidence is not in front of us, so each and every person who votes on this motion, whether it is tonight or some other night, will be voting blindly. That is the way the government prefers us, a little like mushrooms, kept moist and in the dark.

This is a consistent pattern. When members, whether they are in the House or in committee, ask for real evidence on any matter, which now is on lapses, we and the PBO continue to be shut out.

I thought the hon. member's answer on the cost and the benefits was quite interesting. The other interesting point is that this money does not just disappear; it actually goes into investments. Investments generate jobs. I would be interested in the hon. member's thoughts on how much this investment would, in effect, create more jobs.

Hon. John McCallum: Mr. Speaker, while we are a party of evidence, I cannot give a precise numerical answer. However, unlike in the Paul Martin period, when they were increasing premiums but not benefits, here they are increasing premiums and benefits. In that sense, the two things wash. When we take into account the investment and the jobs created thereby, that is another positive effect.

In terms of the member's more general point about the Conservative government not providing evidence, the most egregious case, in my mind, and the stupidest thing it has ever done, if not the most evil, was getting rid of the long form census. It affected people across the whole country, and not just politicians, provincial leaders, and municipal leaders but Tim Hortons and McDonald's, which are wanting to know where to set up their organizations. They were all incredibly hamstrung by the failure of the government to provide this basic document, which provides basic information about who we are as a country.

That failure speaks to the government's incredible inability or unwillingness to provide the evidence that so many Canadians want on every conceivable issue.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP): Mr. Speaker, talking about pensions with this government is reminiscent of the story about the grasshopper and the ant. They are the grasshoppers and we are the ants.

They clearly do not realize that the money saved through a pension plan is not a tax, but a guarantee for people to stave off poverty in retirement.

The Conservatives give money without rhyme or reason to their friends and have a party. They dance and sing using other people's money. Once the recession hits, they give the bill to the ant. The worst part is that the grasshoppers are telling the ants to let them manage their assets. Wow. That is promising. They are hoping that people will accept that. Well, no. It does not work like that.

It is unbelievable that someone who claims to be the Minister of State for Finance is incapable of understanding that savings are not taxes, but investments. The minister is incapable of understanding that.

Mr. Speaker, I must tell you that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Newton—North Delta, who is also a very good friend of mine. I apologize for letting it slip my mind.

Protecting the savings already made is also crucial. Right now, the future is bleak for Canadians. Their retirement savings are at risk. Pension plans are going bankrupt. I did not hear the Minister of State for Finance talk about Nortel, Air Canada or all his friends who suspended pension contributions in the past and poorly invested their retirees' money. They are saying that they are not responsible or to blame, and they are asking workers who saved all their lives to agree to losing half of their money.

Business of Supply

Clearly, when we listen to the speech by the Minister of State for Finance, we understand very well that his decision is to protect and favour his friends, not Canadians. He will have nothing to worry about when he retires because he will have a comprehensive pension plan and his friends will appoint him to the boards of oil companies. However, the vast majority of Canadian workers do not prostitute themselves like that.

How can the government say that the savings generated by enhancing the CPP will not be invested back into the economy?

When people set money aside for savings, they invest it and hope it will generate interest. That is the whole point of saving. If that money is going to earn interest, it has to be invested in Canadian industries and services. That money comes right out of the pockets of all taxpayers to support immediate investment that will produce returns in order to improve people's quality of life and protect them from poverty in retirement.

Not so long ago, people who worked for Nortel and Air Canada lost 40% of their pension. The government is always asking people who save money, who have set it aside, to make sacrifices, yet it absolutely does not want employers to have to take any responsibility in this matter.

The Conservatives put forward a voluntary pension plan. They say their goal is not to take money away. Well, it is the same thing. Savings are savings. They say that workers should be solely responsible for their savings, that the employer should not have to pay and that it will ask pension fund managers for investments or partnerships.

When it is a matter of using workers' money, they have no problem with that, but when it is time for them to do what they should be doing, they tell Canadians that they are not responsible, which is about as much as we can expect from our Minister of State for Finance.

• (1340)

There is one important thing he does not understand. He says that this would be an economic disaster. That makes me think of the dopes in the 1900s who said that women should not have the right to vote because that would turn them into alcoholics or make them hysterical. The Conservatives keep handing us the same old lines—clearly they have put as much thought into this as usual—saying that there will be job losses, the economy will stagnate, and everything will fail spectacularly. They have no proof of that at all. When we ask them to share their analyses with us, they have nothing to offer. It takes some nerve to attack a pension plan based on the delusions and fertile imaginations of people who have nothing else to go on, certainly not competence.

Here is something I need to tell the people across the way, because clearly, they do not know it: once the proposed reform is voted in, it will take three years to implement, and contributions will ramp up over a period of seven years. That means the increase will be spread out over 10 years. The Conservatives have told us to our faces that in 10 years, under their good government, we will still be in a slump. If that is good economic management, I am sorry, but we will do everything we can to get rid of it as soon as possible. Such an open declaration of incompetence is rare.

The Canada pension plan is currently the most secure pension plan. People who put their money into it are certain to get it back. It is not like an RRSP. When you put money into an RRSP, you are investing in venture capital. You risk earning a negative return. This has happened to many people, particularly in 2008. They had less money in their pensions than what they invested.

It is also important to understand that the financial institutions that manage RRSPs factor in a profit rate for themselves. Then, they charge administrative fees. After that, they sometimes have the audacity to give themselves a performance bonus. When things go a bit better than average, they give themselves bonuses and when things go worse than average, they still give themselves bonuses, claiming that it would have been worse had they not been there. In short, investors are the last ones to get paid. Everyone gets paid before them. RRSPs are therefore not the best option.

The CPP is different. First, it provides a return. In order for it to be cost-effective, that return must be about 3%. In addition to that, the CPP has the lowest administrative fees. No financial institution in Canada charges such low fees for that kind of return. I challenge the Conservatives to find evidence to the contrary. We are asking them for proof, not stories, imaginings or idle talk.

The government is not protecting Canadians' right to an effective pension system and that is unfortunate. We are dealing with people who have given up on the role of the Canadian government. The Conservatives are saying that it is not their fault if Canadians end up living in poverty as a result of their governance. It is as though the grasshopper started managing the ants' inheritance. When the grasshopper has spent all the ants' money on its friends, parties and risky investments—when it has wasted all the ants' money—it will have the nerve to tell the ants to tighten their belts.

At some point, the ants have the right to insist that their government act like their government, rather than like the government of its own cronies, senators and everyone but Canadians.

• (1345)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have already indicated that we support the opposition day motion. It is something we take very seriously. The leader of the Liberal Party has been talking a lot about the middle class and this will have a very profound impact on the middle class.

I have had the opportunity on numerous occasions to present petitions to the House dealing with the important issue of pensions. Whether it is the guaranteed annual income pension or OAS, Canadians are concerned about the future. They are concerned about pensions. They do not feel the government is doing enough to protect their future for pensions.

One of the issues we have indicated clearly is the need to retain the option for people to retire at age 65. The government is saying that it wants to increase the age of eligibility for our Canada pension from 65 to 67. We have indicated very clearly that it should retain it at age 65. Would member like to provide some comment on that issue?

Business of Supply

• (1350)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Giguère: Mr. Speaker, on the issue of raising the retirement age from 65 to 67, all stakeholders, including the Parliamentary Budget Officer, the Superintendent of Financial Institutions, the chief actuary of the Canada pension plan and the inspectors of financial institutions, agree that raising the CPP eligibility age from 65 to 67 is not the solution. Financially speaking, that is not the problem.

The hon. member for Winnipeg North is quite right. This was done with just one goal in mind: to cut \$10 billion in order to justify \$10 billion worth of tax cuts for the wealthy. The middle class is being asked to do without \$10 billion in the future so that the government, which favours private enterprise, will be the only one to benefit.

This will not solve the problem for the people of Nortel, among others. It seems that this government does not like hearing about the people of Nortel. I am sorry, but these people lost 40% of their pensions, and the government did not lift a finger.

Mr. Pierre Jacob (Brome—Missisquoi, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Marc-Aurèle-Fortin for his very sincere speech, as always.

He said that the Conservative government was like a grasshopper. I would add that the government misled those people, because it repeated ad nauseam that it would not reduce pensions and then it did exactly that. In the next few years, seniors are going to make up a significant portion of the population. All they want is to live in dignity. I wonder if my colleague could explain what the NDP plans to propose for them.

Mr. Alain Giguère: Mr. Speaker, I am not going to get into the technical formulas concerning disbursement, but I do want to point out one thing: in May 2011, the government members swore, with their hands on their hearts, that they would leave pensions alone.

Now we know just how much a grasshopper's promise is worth—it is worthless. They gutted and are continuing to gut the Canada pension plan. They refuse to assume the government's responsibility for ensuring that the middle class gets its money.

The middle class is now doing without in order to save for the future. The government is sending the message that it will do what it wants to with their money. The middle class will have to do without until the age of 65, 67 or 70—we do not know where the government will draw the line—whereas the government will be flush with money. That is what the Conservatives are proposing. They are anti-Canadian.

[*English*]

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today to speak to our opposition day motion. I want to acknowledge the work of the member for Victoria. He has done an amazing amount of work on this file. I thank him for bringing the motion forward today.

It is important that we discuss this today. This Friday the Minister of Finance will be meeting with the premiers and his provincial

counterparts to discuss pension benefits under the Canada and Quebec pension plans.

Because the Minister of Finance is going to this meeting, we want to urge our colleagues across the way and sideways, from all parties, to support the motion today to send a very strong message, which is that as parliamentarians we support the position that CPP be increased incrementally.

We are going to hear a lot of horror stories and we know our colleagues across the way are very good at shock and awe. However, the reality is that we are putting forward a plan for incremental increases to CPP, not only because it is the right thing to do but because it makes economic sense. We have to take a look at it from the economic side of it.

Besides looking at it economically, we have to remember the people who draw their pensions are the ones who built our beautiful country. They have worked all their lives and they deserve to live their retirement in dignity. There is stark evidence that a growing number of our seniors are living well below the poverty line and out of that a large percentage of that population is women.

I also want to commend the work done by CARP, which has done an amazing amount of work on this file. If we listen to my colleagues across the way and hear their arguments, “The sky is falling, the sky is falling”, one would think this is an idea or something they have just heard about.

I want to draw to the attention of my colleagues across, and this is really worth paying attention to, that increases to CPP is not just an NDP idea. They should not think they have to oppose it because it comes from the NDP. This idea is supported by the provincial governments, the Canadian Labour Congress, Canada's largest retirement organization, CARP, financial experts, the chief executive officer of the CIBC and the chief actuary of the Canada pension plan.

When we look at the diverse support for this, we should consider what goes on in the minds of the members of Parliament who would oppose modest increases to CPP that would lead to lifting many of our seniors out of poverty.

Not only that, I really want us to think about something today. All this week, ever since Thursday, we have all been engulfed in emotions. Those emotions run very deep and run across all party lines and right around the world. Mandela was a gift to the world. What did he talk about? I found an excerpt from one of the speeches he made. He said this:

Like slavery and apartheid, poverty is not natural. It is man-made and it can be overcome and eradicated by the actions of human beings....overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity. It is an act of justice. It is the protection of a fundamental human right, the right to dignity and a decent life. While poverty persists, there is no true freedom.

• (1355)

And overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity. It is an act of justice. It is the protection of a fundamental human right, the right to dignity and a decent life. While poverty persists, there is no true freedom.

When I read those words, it sent tingles down my spine. I am reminded that there have been so many great people who have gone before us, including our predecessors who established CPP.

The CPP, the Canadian pension plan, is not one of those funds that is very small; it is a huge fund. That huge fund has massive opportunities for investment that small funds do not have, and individuals do not have. To me, it is leveraging a huge fund in the Canada pension plan with a modest increase over a number of years so we can get the return to lift our seniors out of poverty.

• (1400)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please.

I must interrupt the hon. member for Newton—North Delta at this time. The time for government orders has expired. She will have four minutes remaining when this matter returns before the House.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

2014 WINTER OLYMPICS AND PARALYMPIC GAMES

Mr. Lawrence Toet (Elmwood—Transcona, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Winnipeg was the place to be this past week for anyone who loves curling. We were the proud host of the Tim Hortons Roar of the Rings, the Canadian curling trials to determine our teams that will represent Canada at the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, Russia.

I want to congratulate everyone involved in this great event at the MTS Centre, from the Canadian Curling Association to event organizers, and all the hard-working volunteers, who made the week such a success.

On Friday, I had the pleasure of participating in the news conference that introduced our wheelchair curling team that will represent Canada at the Paralympic Games in Sochi.

Today, I am proud to congratulate the Jennifer Jones team, from Manitoba, who will represent Canada in Sochi. Jennifer and her team: Kaitlyn Lawes; Jill Officer; Dawn McEwen; coach, Janet Arnott; and alternate Kirsten Wall. They won it all in front of their hometown fans. As Jennifer said, this is a dream come true.

Canada will be well represented by a team that has won four Canadian championships, a world championship in 2008, and a world championship bronze in 2010.

With that, all that is left to say is “go Canada, go”.

* * *

[Translation]

HOLIDAY THANKS

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as this is the last opportunity I will have this year to give a member's statement in the House—although this is not my last speech for 2013—I would like to dedicate these few seconds to the extraordinary people of Gatineau.

I thank everyone in Gatineau for being involved in the riding's civic affairs throughout the year. I thank them for welcoming me and for their constant feedback, which allows me and the members of my team to serve them properly and to help them with their concerns. I thank all House of Commons' employees, who make my job easier. I thank all government employees, who are disliked by the

Statements by Members

Conservative government, and who, every day, perform miracles with ever-dwindling means.

In closing, I give special thanks to all those who provide very necessary community services in these times of disengagement by the heartless Conservative government.

Best wishes to all my constituents for a holiday season filled with happiness and peace, and much health in 2014. My wish for the Conservative government is that it will return in 2014 with a bit of heart.

* * *

[English]

BOB GILMOUR

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I rise to remember the life of Bob Gilmour, a volunteer at Calabogie Peaks, who passed away this Sunday. We have lost a devoted member of the community and an advocate for the disabled in his passing.

Bob was heavily involved with the Canadian Association for Disabled Skiing, which recently hosted its third annual winter sports clinic for servicewomen and servicemen and veterans with disabilities. The winter sports clinic is based on the United States' National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic, which Bob attended as a volunteer instructor for 24 of the 28 years that the clinic has been going on. Six Canadian veterans, along with fifteen disabled American veterans, who have been fully funded, are scheduled to attend the winter sports clinic.

Bob's goal was to grow the Canadian winter sports clinic over the next five years to include more than 50 retired and active injured soldiers. Although he has left us, Bob's legacy and his efforts will live on in the community.

* * *

CHILDHOOD CANCER

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last September Canadians gathered on Parliament Hill to honour Canadian children fighting cancer, both the survivors and those who have lost their lives to this disease.

The event, which included lighting the Peace Tower with gold, happened because of two mothers whose children have cancer, Mrs. Jenny Doull and Mrs. Kari Simpson-Anderson.

Cancer is the leading cause of disease-related death of Canadian children. Despite this fact, in the last six years the Canadian Institutes of Health Research has invested only 3.1% of its budget toward childhood cancer research. Only one drug, clofarabine, has been approved especially for use in treatment of childhood cancer in over 20 years, and over 50% of chemotherapies used today to treat childhood cancer were developed over 25 years ago.

Statements by Members

This year in Canada, 1,500 children will be diagnosed with cancer. One in five of them will die.

As we celebrate St. Nicholas the patron saint of children, we ask the Canadian government to support this issue and to help all children, including those fighting cancer.

* * *

● (1405)

CITIZEN OF KELOWN-LAKE COUNTRY

Hon. Ron Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege and honour to stand in the House today to offer my sincere congratulations to constituent Amanda Clancy. Amanda graduated on December 4, 2013 from CFB Borden as a logistician, receiving the Most Distinguished Award as top of her class.

Instituted to promote teamwork and leadership among students, this award is given to the student who demonstrates exceptional personal commitment to the support and assistance of fellow students. The recipient is chosen by his or her peers without input from the instructional staff.

Amanda enlisted in the navy in 2012 and is being posted to CFB Petawawa. She has been assigned to the 450 Tactical Helicopter Squadron, which when fully deployed will consist of 400 personnel.

Amanda's family and community are very proud of her accomplishments, and we wish her a wonderful career. Once again, we congratulate her and thank her for her service to our country. God bless and good health.

* * *

[*Translation*]

KALPONA AKTER

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as members of Parliament, we often get the opportunity to meet people who make our world a better place. On Wednesday, I met a labour activist from Bangladesh, a very courageous woman who reminds us that hope is powerful enough to move mountains. This woman's name is Kalpona Akter.

She is fighting for safe working conditions in her country's clothing factories.

[*English*]

I have to say that meeting Kalpona Akter was a very humbling experience. I could feel the determination and strength of the millions of her co-workers flowing through her veins, the determination only brought by a profound will to bring justice, freedom and a better life to her community. This is what social action and politics should be all about.

For the coming years, let us make the pledge that we will help them achieve what any of us aspire to. Let us be on the side of the workers, and, like Kalpona Akter, let us fight for a better world.

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Devinder Shory (Calgary Northeast, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to pay tribute to the late Nelson Mandela. I strongly believe in what he said, which is "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world".

The House will adjourn for the winter break this week. I am thankful to Canadians across the country and across partisan lines for their support of my initiative to strip convicted terrorists of the privilege of Canadian citizenship.

I encourage the members opposite to use this break time to reflect upon what Canadians think about this issue and to decide to do what is right: represent the wishes of their constituents and respect the immense value of Canadian citizenship.

I wish my colleagues from all parties a merry Christmas, happy Hanukkah and a happy new year.

I would ask that during the season we also remember those serving us at home and around the world, promoting and protecting our Canadian values that we enjoy day in and day out.

* * *

[*Translation*]

LE CLUB RICHELIEU DE GRAND-SAULT FUNDRAISING DRIVE

Mr. Mike Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as we approach the holiday season, I want to congratulate Le Club Richelieu de Grand-Sault on granting the wishes and meeting the needs of young people in the region every Christmas for 60 years.

For years, it has been collecting funds and investing them in playgrounds for children, recreational facilities and performing arts throughout the community, and the club also started the Guingolée Richelieu, a fundraising drive that brings Christmas cheer to nearly 200 families.

This program collected over \$30,000 this year. I specifically want to thank Robert Violette for opening his business and Violette Ford, which has been taking care of the logistics of personalizing and distributing all the gifts for years.

I sincerely thank Le Club Richelieu de Grand-Sault and all its members for their dedication to the community and for ensuring that Christmas is a happy time for all our children.

* * *

[*English*]

CANADA'S FILIPINO COMMUNITY

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the recent disaster in the Philippines has left enormous destruction in its wake.

In the face of this tragic event, I rise today to honour the Filipino Canadian community across our nation. This calamity has highlighted the uncommon strength, dignity and grace of the Filipino people around the world.

Filipinos have come to Canada from every province in the Philippines. They make up one of the most vibrant threads in Canada's multicultural fabric.

Filipinos have a love of life and appreciation for the most important things in life, family, community, culture and the arts, celebrating all manner of events, personal, religious, historical, that are a lesson for us all.

They possess deep faith, shining optimism and noble Pinoy pride, as quiet in its humility as it is steely in its depth.

Through their response to Typhoon Haiyan, the Filipino community has demonstrated compassion and generosity that enhances our community and elevates our nation.

Mabuhay Philippines.

* * *

• (1410)

JUSTICE

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, James Alfred Cooper is a heinous violent criminal, convicted of numerous despicable crimes, including indecent assault on a person under 14, rape, and assault causing bodily harm. All six of his victims, ranging from seven to 14 years of age, have suffered immeasurable trauma.

Shockingly, this repeat sex offender is being released into my community. This horrific case demonstrates the need for the tougher penalties for child predators act.

Our government promised in the Speech from the Throne to crack down on those who victimize children. We will also be bringing forward legislation to ensure that life sentences mean life sentences behind bars for the worst of the worst criminals.

I call upon the NDP and the Liberals to support these important measures.

* * *

[*Translation*]

SAGUENAY FJORD

Mr. Jonathan Tremblay (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in my riding, we are very lucky to have a unique attraction, the Saguenay Fjord.

For many years now, the Comité Fjord du Saguenay-Patrimoine mondial has been working hard to get the fjord added to Canada's tentative list for world heritage sites, which will be updated in 2014. Even *National Geographic Traveler* recently placed it on its list of the most beautiful places to visit. There is no question that the Saguenay Fjord deserves a spot on UNESCO's prestigious list.

Dr. Jules Dufour, an expert in the field, conducted a feasibility study and concluded that the fjord has the unique characteristics and the necessary attributes to receive such recognition.

I invite MPs and the public to go to www.fjordpatrimoine.com to show their support for the Saguenay Fjord.

Statements by Members

[*English*]

DEAN TIESSEN

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is with a heavy heart that I rise today to offer my thoughts and prayers to the family and friends of Dean Tiessen, a true pioneer in the future of agriculture and agribusiness.

Dean Tiessen, from Leamington, Ontario, was so thoughtlessly taken from us this weekend in Brazil. He was a farmer, an award-winning innovator in biomass energy, entrepreneur, business leader and devout family man. Dean represented the very best of Leamington.

The Tiessen family of farms converted its 40-acre glasshouse tomato operation to use 30,000 tonnes of biomass, growing purpose-grown energy crops. In 2011, he was awarded the Premier's Award for Agri-Food Innovation Excellence for work in Miscanthus. Canadian officials are providing support for the family during this difficult time.

Our thoughts and prayers are with his wife Jennifer, their four children, family and friends.

* * *

FIRST NATIONS EDUCATION

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on December 4, in communities across Canada, aboriginal and non-aboriginal people took to the streets to oppose the government's flawed top-down proposal for first nations education.

AFN National Chief Shawn Atleo has also issued an open letter, flatly telling the government that the current federal proposal for a bill for first nation education is not acceptable to first nations. He highlighted the absolute need for a funding guarantee for first nation children to learn in a safe, secure environment, nurtured within their own language and culture.

I urge the minister to stand up against what we now know, from the Duffy-Wright documents, is direction and messaging from the PMO and reverse his position that he will not even discuss funding until his made in Ottawa reforms are passed. The government needs to go back to the drawing board, sit down with first nations communities and build a workable, fully funded plan that respects, supports and empowers first nations to control their own education systems.

* * *

TEAM JACOBS

Mr. Bryan Hayes (Sault Ste. Marie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am so proud to stand in the House of Commons today to once again recognize the Sault's Team Jacobs, which curled its way into history last night, shooting at 92% against B.C.'s Team Morris and earning its spot to compete in the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, Russia.

Oral Questions

Last week, at the Roar of the Rings Canadian Olympic Curling Trials in Winnipeg, Team Jacobs remained unbeaten throughout the entire competition, the first team to ever achieve such a record. The team, consisting of skip Brad Jacobs, third Ryan Fry, second E.J. Harnden and lead Ryan Harnden, along with the alternate Caleb Flaxey and coach Tom Coulterman, has made Sault Ste. Marie and northern Ontario so proud. This was a very well-earned and deserved victory by the entire team.

We will be cheering Team Jacobs on as it represents Canada and Sault Ste. Marie in Russia in February 2014. On behalf of all of my colleagues in the House, congratulations and good luck in Sochi.

* * *

• (1415)

[Translation]

THE SENATE

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week the impertinent Senator Jean-Guy Dagenais joined the member for Calgary West in the Conservative chorus of ineptitude. That nasty Senator Dagenais looks like a real winner.

This is the same man who vigorously defended the firearms registry, before salivating at the idea of a limousine and then completely changing his mind. That is called having no backbone and no principles.

He got what he deserved. He finished third, a pathetic showing for a star candidate. Naturally, the Prime Minister rewarded his abysmal failure by giving him a job for life, at \$135,000 a year.

After sleeping for two years on the backbenches, he finally did something to stand out last week.

Did he demand accountability in the Senate scandal? No.

Did he oppose his boss's irresponsible policies? Never.

Still bitter about his crushing defeat, he sent a letter to all members, insulting someone who dared to point out the complete obsolescence of the Senate.

By doing so, Senator Dagenais proved just one thing: it is high time that we rolled up the red carpet and abolished the Senate. Canadians strongly agree.

* * *

[English]

VANESSA'S LAW

Mr. Terence Young (Oakville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last Friday, I was proud to join Canada's Minister of Health to announce new patient safety legislation, Bill C-17, the protecting Canadians from unsafe drugs act, subtitled "Vanessa's Law", named after my daughter, Vanessa Young. In 2000, at age 15, Vanessa's life was sacrificed to maintain the sales of a Wall Street blockbuster drug, Propulsid.

It is difficult to overstate the impact the bill will have for Canadians who take prescription and over the counter drugs. It represents a quantum leap forward in protecting vulnerable patients and reducing serious adverse drug reactions.

Combined with the plain language labelling initiative announced last June, Vanessa's law would: put an end to inadequate safety warnings; empower Health Canada to order unsafe drugs off the market when dangers first become clear; require mandatory adverse drug reaction reporting, creating an early and robust warning system for patients; and, undoubtedly, reduce preventable harm from drugs and save thousands of lives.

Vanessa would be pleased that her loss of life has led to this powerful legislation to prevent similar tragedies in other families.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

ETHICS

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians have been witnessing months of Conservative evasion and doublespeak when it comes to the Senate expense scandal and the cover-up hatched in the Prime Minister's own office.

To be crystal clear, could the government tell us this? Has the Prime Minister always told the House everything he knows about what happened in his office surrounding the illegal payment to former Conservative Senator Mike Duffy?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the record is absolutely clear, as has all of the evidence brought forward through the RCMP's ITO, that the Prime Minister was not aware that Mr. Wright transferred personal funds for Mr. Duffy to repay his expenses. That is very clear.

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that is interesting because it was only a couple of weeks ago that the Prime Minister admitted he was actually first told on May 15 about the payment from the party to then Conservative senator Mike Duffy to pay his legal expenses. The Prime Minister was asked repeatedly for months about any payments made to senator Duffy and yet he chose to say nothing.

Why did the Prime Minister withhold information from the House and from Canadians for almost six months?

• (1420)

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister did no such thing. He has been clear that he learned about the transfer from Mr. Wright to Mr. Duffy for the repayment of his inappropriately claimed living expenses after that fact became public.

[Translation]

Ms. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what was the Prime Minister told on May 15? Was he told about the role played by his lawyer, Benjamin Perrin? Was he told about the role played by Senator Gerstein? Did he learn how many members of his staff were involved in this affair?

Oral Questions

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her question.

The Prime Minister has been clear about this since May 15. He learned from the media about the transfer between Mr. Wright and Mr. Duffy for the repayment of the inappropriately claimed expenses. The Prime Minister learned about it when it became a public issue in the media.

Ms. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister was not informed by his staff, then. That implies that the members of his staff did not do what they were supposed to do. That is what is known as irresponsible behaviour.

It is just not possible that no one in the Prime Minister's Office informed the Prime Minister that members of his staff were involved in the scandal.

Why did he not inform the House about this in May, when he was given the opportunity to show some transparency?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her question.

The Prime Minister has repeatedly and clearly stated that he was disappointed about not being informed by his staff of the transfer between Mr. Wright and Mr. Duffy. That is why there were staff changes in his office.

Ms. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the first time he was asked about Nigel Wright, the Prime Minister said he was an honourable person who had saved taxpayer dollars. Now he is calling him a liar who betrayed his trust. This is known as doing an about-face to save face.

The Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics will consider a motion by the NDP to study the temporarily missing emails in the Prime Minister's Office. Will the government support our motion?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the member well knows, the RCMP is conducting an investigation. The Prime Minister's Office is working very closely with the RCMP. All the emails requested by the RCMP will be made available.

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, according to the RCMP, Senator Gerstein was willing to pay \$32,000 to reimburse Mike Duffy. He was prepared to tamper with an independent audit by Deloitte by contacting Michael Runia to ask for confidential information. Senator Gerstein abused his power on the Standing Senate Committee on Banking, Trade and Commerce by denying the committee its right to question him.

Will the government ask Senator Gerstein and Michael Runia to appear tomorrow before the House of Commons Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member is asking a question about committee business in the other place. That is not the administrative responsibility of the government.

[*English*]

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Conservatives in the Senate have been protecting Senator Gerstein from having to account for his actions, including agreeing to use donor money to pay a sitting Senator more than \$32,000, seeking to corrupt an independent Senate audit by Deloitte, and abusing his position as chair of the banking committee to shut down an attempt by the committee to get him to come clean.

Will the government commit to calling Gerstein and auditor Michael Runia to testify tomorrow to the House ethics committee?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I understand it, Deloitte has been clear that it conducted the audit in question in a completely independent fashion. With respect to what witnesses are called by Senate committees, that is the business of the Senate and the members.

If the member wants to put forward motions at committees of the House, he is welcome to do so. Those matters are dealt with by the House. They are not the administrative responsibility of the government.

● (1425)

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for months, the Prime Minister and his department have hidden Ben Perrin's emails from the RCMP. It was only when the cops were loading the battering ram for the Langevin Block that the deleted emails suddenly became un-deleted.

Canadians do not believe that the most controlling Prime Minister in Canadian history knew nothing of the corruption and cover-up in his office. It is time to clear the air. Will the Prime Minister agree to release all of the emails they have handed over to the RCMP so that Canadians can judge for themselves?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think the member does know that he is prone to exaggeration. He does know, however, that the Prime Minister's Office is co-operating with every request made of it by the—

An hon. member: Space does that to the mind. It is the zero gravity area in the mind.

Hon. Jason Kenney: Mr. Speaker, in fact, to the emails in question, the Privy Council Office has said:

We regret that we previously failed, even if inadvertently, to accurately inform you and the PMO...

Of course, the RCMP's ITO said:

I am not aware of any evidence that the prime minister was involved in the repayment or reimbursement of money to Senator Duffy or his lawyer.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when the Senate scandal broke, the Prime Minister began to tell us his version of the facts. He told us three things on May 15. First, there was no legal agreement between Mr. Duffy and Mr. Wright. Second, Mr. Wright was the only one who knew about what had happened. Finally, there was only one payment. None of that is true. The RCMP has refuted all of it, every single bit.

Oral Questions

What else is he hiding?

[English]

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what the Prime Minister did do, as soon as he found out about these allegations in the media, was go back to his office and order that his office completely assist the RCMP in providing all the information the RCMP required. He also ensured that members of his staff provided waivers of solicitor-client privilege and waivers, through their legal counsel, with respect to the emails that were delivered to the RCMP.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the NDP is the party of hope, so I always nurture the slim hope that I will get an intelligent response. Unfortunately, I am always disappointed.

Even if we pretend to believe that the Prime Minister knew absolutely nothing before May 15, we at least know that he got a briefing from his officials and employees on that date.

What was he told during that briefing? Who told him who was involved? What was the communications strategy? Did other members of his team lie to him, or did the Prime Minister ask for all of the information and deliberately decide to hide the truth from Canadians? What happened?

[English]

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as we know, Senator Duffy approached the Prime Minister on February 13 to try to justify his inappropriately claimed expenses. The Prime Minister told him that, of course, he had to repay those expenses. Senator Duffy then went on TV and told all Canadians that he had actually used his own resources to repay those expenses. We know that was not, in fact, the case and that Nigel Wright actually repaid those expenses.

The Prime Minister found out about this on May 15 and made sure that his office provided complete co-operation and assistance to the RCMP and provided any emails and documentation they required.

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we know from RCMP documents that Irving Gerstein spoke with Nigel Wright and Mike Duffy about using the Conservative Party fund to pay back former Conservative senator Mike Duffy's improper expenses.

When did the Prime Minister first learn that the party had offered to cover the entire payment? Was it on May 15?

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Again, Mr. Speaker, the party did not pay the expenses of Senator Duffy on this matter. As we have said, there was some legal assistance that was provided to the senator, but that, of course, is not unusual in any manner. We do assist members who require legal assistance.

As I have noted on a number of occasions, the Leader of the Opposition accepted the same legal assistance from his party, to the tune of hundreds of thousands of dollars. The difference is, of course, that we do not pay the judgments when we are found guilty.

When the Leader of the Opposition was found guilty, his party actually paid the judgment as well as the legal fees. We do not do that.

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if the Prime Minister knew that the Conservative Party had offered to pay Mike Duffy's illegally claimed expenses, and if the Prime Minister knew the Conservative Party had, in fact, paid for his legal bills, what did the Prime Minister have to say about Irving Gerstein's comments, from November 2, when he claimed the exact opposite? When can we expect the Prime Minister to sanction Mr. Gerstein for misleading Canadians?

● (1430)

The Speaker: I did not hear anything in that question that touched on the administrative responsibility of the government. It seemed to be a question about party finances, and we have had previous rulings before on that.

The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives have been claiming that they followed all the rules when they attempted to flush Ben Perrin's emails, but here is what the act says. It is an indictable offence to “destroy, mutilate or alter a record; falsify...or conceal a record” or to direct any person to do so.

It leads to the question of whether or not the Prime Minister's Office was involved in breaking the law with this cover-up. Will the parliamentary secretary tell us whether or not the government will support our motion at the ethics committee tomorrow to investigate this attempted destruction of Benjamin Perrin's emails?

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, of course, these emails were not destroyed. They were being held in a different file for different litigation. When the assistant clerk of the Privy Council discovered this, she made those emails immediately available to the RCMP.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will repeat. It is an indictable offence to conceal a record.

Anyway, we are shaking our heads at the government, just like Canadians are shaking their heads at the failed Conservative candidate and now unelected, unaccountable Senator Jean-Guy Dagenais, who went to Speaker Kinsella offering to defend the Senate by attacking the NDP. The result was this bitter and bizarre personal attack against a standing, elected member of the House of Commons.

Is this really how the Conservatives are planning to restore the credibility of this disgraced institution? Will the Conservatives tell us who in the government was involved in this personal attack, and did the Prime Minister's Office help coordinate it?

Oral Questions

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me say this. I do understand the frustrations of the people of Quebec with respect to the NDP members. Of course, for the people of Quebec, their priorities are like all other Canadians. They want a strong economy. They want job creation. They want open markets for their products. They want public safety and security. They want the investments in arts and culture we have been making. When it comes to those priorities, the people of Quebec know that the only people they can trust to deliver are the Conservative Party and this government.

[Translation]

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): How ironic, Mr. Speaker. After seeing so many emails demonstrating just how much the Prime Minister's Office is pulling the strings in the Senate, we are trying to determine just how involved the Conservatives were in Senator Dagenais' insulting letter to my colleague, but we cannot get an answer. It is really quite ironic.

Let us continue with Senator Dagenais' exploits. He was the one who publicly opposed having the Auditor General examine Senate expenses. Can the Conservatives confirm that Senator Dagenais' expenses are in order?

[English]

The Speaker: I think these questions about what may or may not take place in the other place are a matter for questions in the other place, but not for question period today.

The hon. member has a follow-up question. I will ask her to try to keep the purpose of her question to the administrative responsibilities of the government.

The hon. member for Pierrefonds—Dollard.

[Translation]

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, once again, let us continue with the exploits of Senator Dagenais, another senator who does not live in his senate division.

Not only did he oppose the Auditor General's review, but he refused to hear the testimony of Michael Runia, whom Mr. Gerstein tried to influence in the Duffy matter. For a former police officer to refuse to hear from a key witness, now that is really weak.

Does Senator Dagenais have something to hide? Did he refuse that of his own accord, or was he following instructions from the office—

The Speaker: The purpose of question period is not to ask government members to answer for the actions of senators, but rather to ask them about the administration of government.

The hon. member for Terrebonne—Blainville.

* * *

PRIVACY

Ms. Charmaine Borg (Terrebonne—Blainville, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to go back to the emails that magically vanished and then reappeared.

The emails were initially frozen because of unrelated legal litigation, that is the legal action dealing with the privacy breach at Human Resources and Skills Development Canada. We know that the RCMP now has Perrin's emails and that the matter is moving forward.

However, what about the privacy breach at Human Resources and Skills Development Canada? What is happening and when will the people affected be given answers?

• (1435)

[English]

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again, the emails in question have been made available to the RCMP for review. It also goes to show the level of assistance the Prime Minister's Office is providing to the RCMP, and the leadership, of course, of the Prime Minister in making sure that all of the information the RCMP has requested has been made available.

At the same time, the protection of personal privacy is something that is extraordinarily important to this government, and we take every step that is needed to ensure the privacy and protection of Canadians' information that is deposited into the hands of the government.

* * *

ETHICS

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the RCMP claims that Dan Hilton, former executive director of the Conservative Party, was told about Nigel Wright's plan to pay Mike Duffy \$90,000. Hilton previously handled Duffy's expenses, and even emailed him, and I quote: "I have arranged to set funds aside where it makes sense and have discussed this with Jenni Byrne".

Hilton, Byrne, and other PMO staff who knew about the illegal payments should be called to testify under oath. Will the government stop the cover-up and support calling these staffers before the House ethics committee?

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, of course, the House ethics committee will decide on its own what it studies and who it brings before committee. At the same time, the RCMP documents the member refers to clearly indicate that it is Senator Duffy and Nigel Wright who are the subjects of the investigation. They also quite clearly indicate that the Prime Minister ordered his office to assist the RCMP in any way it could. At the same time, they indicate that the Prime Minister had no knowledge of what was going on, and as the Prime Minister has said, had he known, he would have put an immediate stop to it.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the RCMP affidavits are very clear: not one, but several members from the Prime Minister's Office, from his inner circle, were very much aware of the payment from Nigel Wright to Mike Duffy.

Let us talk about consequences for Woodcock, Rogers, Van Hemmen, and Hilton. What happens to them? They get promotions. What we need is accountability.

Oral Questions

My question to the government is: when can we expect that those individuals are going to be called before this House where they can testify under oath?

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, of course, the RCMP is looking into this matter. The RCMP has identified that it is Senator Duffy and Nigel Wright who are the subjects of the investigation.

In the documents the member refers to, I would refer him to page 72, where it says, "I am not aware of any evidence that the Prime Minister was involved in the repayment or reimbursement of money to Senator Duffy or his lawyer".

The documents also show on page 21 that this Prime Minister showed the leadership Canadians expect by making sure that his office provided any assistance the RCMP required, including turning over hundreds of emails for it to review.

Again, it is Nigel Wright and Senator Duffy who are the subjects of the investigation.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister wishes it was Wright and Duffy only. The reality is that there were a good number of people within his inner circle who were involved. What should they have done? They should have gone to the police instead of forming a fraud squad.

My question to the government is: when can we anticipate that the government will do the honourable thing and have these people testify under oath at a House committee?

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think that member identifies just why sometimes the House of Commons is not the appropriate place to put people under investigation. That is why we have the RCMP. It is doing that. That is why the Prime Minister, of course, ensured that his office provided complete assistance to the RCMP, turning over hundreds of emails and any documents the RCMP requested.

The Prime Minister has also already stated that had he known, he would have put a stop to this and that he had expected more from the people who worked for him. The Prime Minister also clearly stated that he believed he should have been made aware of this and was very disappointed by that but will continue to work with the RCMP on this.

* * *

• (1440)

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, CBC has discovered that CN has failed to report hundreds of derailments. They blame vague government rules.

The public has a right to know the truth about all derailments. Has CN faced any sanctions, any punishment for hiding the truth about derailments, or are the vague rules to blame?

What will the minister do to make sure Canadians are better protected and know the truth about all derailments?

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the reality is that the Transportation Safety Board did note that there was a discrepancy in the number of incidents that were being reported by CN. The board approached CN in 2006. They sorted out what should be reported, and since that point in time in 2007, the appropriate incidents have been reported.

I commend the TSB for its great work in the matter.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, 1,800 accidents were not reported by CN. These were not minor accidents: 44% were main-track derailments.

All accidents involving trains should be reported because these trains travel through every community in Canada. Canadians deserve to know the truth about CN's safety record. What will the minister do to ensure that CN produces accurate reports?

[*English*]

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Transportation Safety Board was set up as its own entity in order to be able to do the investigations that it can do at arm's length from the Parliament of Canada.

Indeed, it was the board that set the definitions for the reporting of any incidents. That is why it is appropriate that CN work with the Transportation Safety Board of Canada to ensure that the appropriate incidents are being reported, and since that time in 2007, that has been the case.

* * *

[*Translation*]

PENSIONS

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the fact is that the Conservatives ignored every warning bell that went off about rail safety. They sat back until it was too late.

It is the same thing with Canadians' pensions. The evidence is piling up: if we do not take action now, we are headed for a crisis.

Will the Conservatives support the motion to increase the CPP and will they commit to guaranteeing that every Canadian has a comfortable retirement, or will they continue to ignore the warning signs until it is too late once again?

[*English*]

Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, today we are debating the Canada pension plan, but one thing Canadians are very aware of is the NDP plan to raise CPP costs while the economy is still fragile. That could cost up to 70,000 jobs here in Canada.

Maybe New Democrats do not understand how the economy works. They should know that it is very difficult to have any type of retirement if we do not have a job today.

This government will continue to stand up for job creation. We will continue to stand up for moving the economy forward so that all Canadians can prosper.

Oral Questions

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians deserve a serious conversation about retirement security, but what we get from Conservatives is fearmongering and rhetoric.

It is Conservative cuts that have reduced the GDP by billions of dollars, yet we are told that when it comes to ensuring retirement security for Canadians, we cannot afford it. What we really cannot afford are these Conservatives.

Will the government see reason and support our motion today for an affordable and phased-in increase to the Canada pension plan?

Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, that irresponsible New Democratic Party plan can force a family of two workers in the home to pay as much as \$2,600 more each year.

In this fragile global economy, Canadians simply cannot afford the NDP plan. In every jurisdiction where the NDP has had power, the economy has suffered.

* * *

NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Ryan Leef (Yukon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are proud that our government has made our northern identity a top priority. Unfortunately, last week the Liberal leader refused to stand up for Canada's north when he said that the North Pole is not Canadian.

This is a poor kind of leadership that Canadians are expecting from a leader who wants to promote reckless programs to legalize marijuana and to remove mandatory minimums on child sexual predators.

Canadians know that it is our government and our party that are standing up for the north. Can the hard-working Minister of the Environment please tell this House exactly what our government is doing to enhance the economic opportunities for all northerners?

• (1445)

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of the Environment, Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and Minister for the Arctic Council, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from the Yukon, who is working hard for all northerners.

Our government is getting results for northerners. We reversed the cuts of the previous Liberal government and even created a stand-alone economic development agency, CanNor, to focus entirely on the territories.

We are moving forward with devolution in the Northwest Territories, we have made record infrastructure investments, and we have increased funding for skills training.

While the leader of the Liberal Party and the NDP member for the Western Arctic refuse to stand up for northerners and Canadian sovereignty, our government will continue to defend Canada's north.

[*Translation*]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week, the Minister of State for Small Business and Tourism, and Agriculture wanted to talk about employment insurance with Quebec farmers.

Instead of listening to their concerns, he chose to insult them by implying that unemployed workers are only looking to lie on the beach in Cuba. Once again the minister has shown that the Conservatives are managing employment insurance based on prejudices. There is no consultation beforehand, no impact study afterward; just their good old prejudices.

Will the member for Beauce apologize for his offensive comments or will he stick to being the spokesperson for the Minister of Human Resources, who says the same kind of offensive things?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, employment insurance remains accessible to Canadians who lose their jobs. However, they are required to actively look for available work at their skill level and in their area. That is not something extraordinary.

Fortunately, we are seeing an increase in the number of workers available for businesses, such as ski hills and tourist operators, as a result of the changes we have made. This means that we are achieving our goal of getting more Quebecers and Canadians working.

[*English*]

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one has to only look at London, Ontario, to see how Conservatives are failing Canadian workers.

Since 2006, London has lost over 10,000 manufacturing jobs. Even today, almost 3,000 more people are unemployed, yet the minister of tourism is senselessly attacking Canadians on EI, and an EI whistleblower has confirmed that Conservatives unfairly targeted first nations and new Canadians applying for EI.

When will the Conservatives end this attack on unemployed Canadians and on Londoners?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that member keeps up her track record. That is really classy.

The allegations that that member has just repeated are shameful and completely false, and the person responsible for making them is lying.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sana Hassainia (Verchères—Les Patriotes, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when Sylvie Therrien blew the whistle on EI quotas, the Conservatives fired her instead of thanking her for uncovering bad practices.

Yesterday, on *Tout le monde en parle*, she said, "I was under pressure to find fraud even where there was none."

Oral Questions

Why are the Conservatives trying to invent cases of EI fraud when they cannot even fix problems involving their fraudulent senators?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we want employment insurance to be available for unemployed workers who cannot find jobs in their area that match their skills.

We also have to protect the system. The Auditor General has repeatedly said that there is too much fraud in the system. That is why we are making sure that people who apply for employment insurance benefits are eligible to receive them.

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Ms. Therrien's allegations should be taken seriously, but the Conservatives are refusing to do that. Their own inspectors have strict quotas that target specific groups.

Once again, in Ms. Therrien's words, "Seasonal workers were another huge target. People looking for imaginary fraud also unfairly targeted new Canadians and first nations".

Will the Conservatives stop treating workers in entire sectors like criminals?

• (1450)

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, according to the Auditor General, EI fraud is quite real and not at all imaginary. That being said, the insinuation that Service Canada is targeting certain segments of the population is completely and totally false.

* * *

[English]

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it was my privilege to attend a veterans round table in Guelph on Friday, but I was left heartbroken at their descriptions of how the government is treating them. Veterans young and old told me they feel abandoned. They told me that they go from hero to zero when they return home. Veterans find the government is dismissive, paying only lip service to their issues. The government's failure to deal with their abandonment is having severe consequences.

Could the minister explain why meaningful efforts are not being made to restore our veterans' dignity?

Mr. Parm Gill (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is coming from a Liberal Party that believes giving money to veterans injured in the service of Canada is "...like hanging a case of beer in front of a drunk... They get a lump sum, they go and spend it, either trying to buy a house or buying a fast car or spending it on booze or addiction."

Until the Liberal Party stops disrespecting Canada's veterans, we would take no lessons from that party.

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, veterans will be very disappointed with that non-answer.

More than four years ago, the national defence committee reported on the gaps in care for Canadian Armed Forces members returning

from combat and provided 36 concrete and unanimous recommendations, yet today most of those recommendations have still not been implemented, including long-term monitoring of the mental health of returning service members to ensure they get the proper treatment and support if they need it.

How many more tragedies have to happen before the government acts on these crucial recommendations of Parliament's own committee four long years ago?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have acted and we will continue to act. No government has done more to invest in the care of our men and women in uniform, and indeed our veterans, than this government. We have made unprecedented investments in this area. We have almost doubled the number of health care workers.

We all have a responsibility to reach out to those individuals who need our care, and under this government they will continue to be a priority.

* * *

[Translation]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, while the Conservatives are weakening our system for regulating arms exports, the export of weapons to countries such as Bahrain and Iraq has doubled in recent years. The Conservatives are dragging their feet when it comes to the Arms Trade Treaty and they have delayed implementing firearms marking regulations.

Why exactly is the minister insisting on ignoring the impact of arms trade on human rights, peace and security?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada already has some of the strongest laws and regulations supporting export controls on Canadian arms being exported abroad. All applications are reviewed, and we follow Canadian regulations and Canadian laws very carefully, as Canadians would rightly expect us to do.

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let us be clear what we are talking about here. Canada is now exporting arms to countries like Algeria, Iraq, and Bahrain. At the same time, the Conservatives are refusing to sign the UN arms trade treaty.

It is a very simple question. Does the government actually understand that listening only to their friends in the gun lobby is undermining our reputation on arms control?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we do not want to criminalize being a duck hunter, being a farmer, or being a sportsman. That is our position. Canada already has some of the toughest laws and regulations with respect to exporting arms. This government follows those laws. This government ensures that the law is respected, as Canadians would rightly expect us to do.

Oral Questions

•(1455)

Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians just cannot trust the NDP to stand up for what is right on the world stage.

On Friday, when our Minister of Foreign Affairs and other foreign ministers visited the peaceful demonstrators in Ukraine's Independence Square, the member for Ottawa Centre said, "Joining the protest signals that you are on one side".

Unlike the moral relativism we too often see from the NDP, on this side of the House we stand for a principled foreign policy.

The NDP critic also said he wanted the Minister of Foreign Affairs to explain why he talked to these brave Ukrainian demonstrators. Would the minister tell the House now?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, like this member, I was shocked at these comments by the NDP foreign affairs critic.

I will tell members whose side this government stands on. We stand on the side of Ukrainian people in their fight for democracy.

I am very proud to promote Canadian values, to promote a citizen's right to peacefully protest. I am very proud to have not only met with government representatives when I was in Ukraine, but I am very proud to have travelled to the Maidan to meet with opposition leaders and to hear the voices of the people of Ukraine who are pushing for democracy and freedom in their great country.

* * *

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the global tourism industry generates over a trillion dollars in annual revenue.

However, despite this, Conservatives continue to put up road-blocks by closing visa offices and slashing funding for the tourist sector by more than 20%.

With the upcoming Pan Am Games looming on the horizon, is the government planning to have an expedited visa process for visitors to Canada to go to the games?

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government is well aware of the enormous role that Canadian tourism plays. We have been working hard with our global network to ensure that even in spite of the work disruptions this summer, tourist visits to Canada continue to rise. We are working very closely with the organizers of the Pan Am Games to ensure we provide full service, better service than ever, for this unprecedented event in the greater Toronto area, to which we look forward on this side of the House with great enthusiasm.

* * *

[Translation]

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle (Rivière-du-Nord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, October's throne speech was quite clear: companies would no longer be allowed to charge customers an additional fee for a paper copy of their bills. Two months later, nothing has been done. Canadians still have to pay \$2 to get a paper copy of their bills.

These additional fees are unacceptable because they mainly penalize seniors and low-income people.

When will the government put words into action and put an end to this practice?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the CRTC is in the process of examining this issue and we will make an announcement in this regard in the very near future.

* * *

REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Jim Hillyer (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, months after the Lac-Mégantic tragedy, our government continues to take practical measures to help those affected. For residents, this tragedy is much more than a newspaper headline. It still affects their daily lives.

Can my colleague from Mégantic—L'Érable, the hon. Minister of International Development and Minister for La Francophonie, give us an update on the efforts that our government is making to help Lac-Mégantic?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of International Development and Minister for La Francophonie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his excellent question. We must continue to help the people of Lac-Mégantic, a beautiful community that I have the honour of representing in the House.

I am very pleased that our government is putting every effort into supporting the community. Last Friday, my colleagues and I were there to announce that that \$60 million would quickly be distributed to the community of Lac-Mégantic. Of that amount, \$35 million will go toward helping the municipality to rebuild and helping local businesses to recover. A total of \$25 million will be quickly distributed as our government's contribution to immediate response and recovery needs.

As the Prime Minister has said, we will all rebuild this town together, and that obviously includes the federal government.

* * *

[English]

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, aboriginal youth in northern Manitoba have been told for months that they will receive support through the skills link program. This support allows these young people to survive in programs that train them for the trades and for job opportunities, supposed priorities for the current government.

It has been six months. Will the minister act and re-fund this program that has been promised to these people, or will his government continue to make money off the backs of young aboriginal people in our country?

Oral Questions

● (1500)

Mr. Mark Strahl (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is focusing on funding projects that generate tangible results. We will continue to support the delivery of essential programs and services through organizations that get results, contributing to the improved living conditions and economic development of aboriginal peoples while respecting Canadian taxpayers.

* * *

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, like the Liberals before them, the Conservatives are dipping into the employment insurance fund to pay down their deficit.

The Minister of Finance can spout all the rhetoric he wants, do all kinds of public relations and keep denying it, but his own figures contradict him. The economic update clearly says that the federal government will take an average of \$3.5 billion per year from the employment insurance fund from now until 2017. In addition to misappropriating money and altering the purpose of the fund, the Conservatives are bringing in reforms that go after workers and the most vulnerable unemployed through targeted profiling.

How can the Minister of Finance still deny that he is plundering billions of dollars from the employment insurance fund when his own—

[English]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have frozen EI rates for the next three years, given the relative weakness in the world economy. We are not going to do what the Liberals did, that is, steal \$50 billion from the—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. Using those types of words during question period does not help the flow of debate and causes disorder. It has been found to be unparliamentary in the past.

The hon. Minister of Finance still has some time left. I will allow him to answer the question. However, I do urge that he choose his words judiciously.

Hon. Jim Flaherty: Mr. Speaker, to take without consent—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. Now the member is out of time.

The hon. member for Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia.

* * *

[Translation]

PRIVACY

Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there are just over two weeks left before Christmas. If you still have not bought all of your gifts,

you might consider doing what thousands of Quebeckers are doing this year and buying gifts online.

However, a growing number of them are worried about the new practices of big companies like Bell and Google, which are not only collecting more and more personal information, but also reaping huge profits by selling this information to advertisers and partners. This is a disturbing situation that vastly increases the risk of privacy breaches online. The federal government has said nothing about this situation.

When will this government take action and protect the public?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we already have legislation that protects individuals and their information. I agree with the opposition member that it is very important for these companies to explain why they are collecting this information and what they are doing with it.

It is also important for consumers to protect themselves when it comes to the information they disclose online.

* * *

[English]

INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Peterborough, Cons. Ind.): Mr. Speaker, I applaud the government's confident and aggressive trade initiative. Trade barriers limit growth, productivity and prosperity, while reducing overall employment.

In 2007, shortly after Alberta and B.C. established a trade investment and labour mobility agreement, I proposed a more sweeping national plan entitled "Completing Confederation" for the government's consideration. Picking up on this important and still outstanding initiative, a coalition of business groups has written the Minister of Industry highlighting that barriers between Canada's provinces continue, even as we celebrate the Canada-Europe free trade agreement.

Will the minister engage his provincial counterparts and seek to end these ill-conceived interprovincial trade barriers?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are the party of free trade, of FTA, of NAFTA and the Canada-Europe free trade agreement. It should not be easier for a business in Ontario to do business in New York State and Michigan than it is to do business in Quebec and Manitoba. We want to break down the internal barriers to trade in this country.

Specifically to my colleague opposite, this Thursday I will be meeting with my provincial counterparts to discuss this issue. This matter has been talked about for too long. I want to see specific actions. I want to see the ball moving forward so that we can break down internal barriers to trade and have more prosperity for Canadians all across this country.

Routine Proceedings

• (1505)

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of the Hon. Don Scott, Associate Minister of Accountability, Transparency and Transformation for the Province of Alberta.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, you will remember that Speaker Milliken used to say that he worked harder in the last week of every session than he did in all of the weeks leading up to that last week when tempers rise.

New Democrats have a particular question coming out of question period, in which you involved yourself over several questions. This is an important point on which we will seek clarification from you.

[*Translation*]

There was a very personal attack from an unelected and unaccountable senator on the member for Terrebonne—Blainville. That is the crux of the issue. The government and the Prime Minister's Office have controlled many aspects of the Senate. Our question about the involvement of the Prime Minister's Office is at the heart of the issue involving the member for Terrebonne—Blainville.

[*English*]

Mr. Speaker, we will be looking forward to some intervention on your part and your office's part to explain how it is that MPs cannot ask questions, when it has been proven in RCMP-filed evidence that the Prime Minister's Office has involved itself and in fact controlled many aspects of what happens in that other place, the Senate. Therefore, when an attack goes against a member of the House from any party from a member of that chamber, it is now a viable and living question as to the implications of the Prime Minister's Office and the coordination and thinking out of that attack.

We will look forward to your ruling and guidance in this matter.

The Speaker: I appreciate the hon. opposition House leader's rising to seek some clarification and guidance. I will, of course, endeavour to do just that.

As the member well knows, during question period the Speaker does try to ensure that the main principle, which is to hold the government to account and ensure that questions touch on the administrative responsibilities of government, is upheld. Sometimes questions are phrased a certain way that makes it more difficult for the Chair to parse the words and draw the line. However, I will endeavour to come back to the House and perhaps point to some examples in the past and remind the House of some of the principles that are espoused in the procedural books that try to guide us during question period.

[*English*]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**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 54 petitions.

* * *

AGRICULTURAL GROWTH ACT

Hon. Lynne Yelich (for the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-18, An Act to amend certain Acts relating to agriculture and agri-food.

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

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the second report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development entitled, "The Organization of American States: Strengthening the Foundation of Canada's Multilateral Engagement in the Americas".

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

* * *

STATISTICS ACT

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-562, An Act to amend the Statistics Act (Chief Statistician and long-form census).

He said: Mr. Speaker, as legislators and citizens, we need to have the best data so that we can understand and respond to the challenges facing all Canadians.

Today, I am pleased to present an act to amend the Statistics Act, which would amend the appointment process for the chief statistician and extend the authority of that position, shielding it from political interference. My bill would increase the independence of the chief statistician, recognizing that the position requires significant expertise in data collection and statistical analysis that politicians should avoid interfering with.

The bill would also reinstate the mandatory long form census called for publicly by former chief statisticians, including Ivan Fellegi and Munir Sheikh. I am proud to present the bill and I hope that all parties will support the bill to protect the integrity of Statistics Canada.

Routine Proceedings

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

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● (1510)

LINCOLN ALEXANDER DAY ACT

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-563, An Act respecting a Lincoln Alexander Day.

She said: Mr. Speaker, Lincoln MacCauley Alexander, one of the most outstanding and accomplished Canadians of our time, was born on January 21, 1922. Rising above the prejudice of the era, he embraced the opportunity of public education. He developed his talents and reached his full potential through disciplined study and the strength of his character.

He served in the Royal Canadian Air Force during World War II. Home again after the war, he graduated from McMaster University and Osgoode Hall Law School and qualified as a lawyer.

Responding to the call of public service, he was elected to the House of Commons in 1968, representing Hamilton West. In 1979, he was appointed to be minister of labour, making history as the Government of Canada's first black cabinet minister. Later he served as chair of the worker's compensation board of Ontario, now known as the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board; as the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, the representative of Her Majesty the Queen; and as chancellor of the University of Guelph, among many other community contributions.

He passed away on October 19, 2012 at the age of 90. His life was an example of service, determination and humility. Always fighting for equal rights for all races in our society and doing so without malice, he changed attitudes and contributed greatly to the inclusiveness and tolerance of Canada today.

I cannot think of a more fitting tribute than to make January 21, the date of his birth, Lincoln Alexander Day in Canada. I am pleased to have the full support of the members for Hamilton Centre and Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, as well as our leader and the entire caucus, for this important bill. I hope we will be able to pass it today.

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

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS AND NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT

Hon. John Duncan (Minister of State and Chief Government Whip, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there have been consultations, and I believe if you seek it you will find unanimous consent for the following motions regarding two standing committees of this place.

I move:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, in relation to the membership of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, the Order of the House adopted on Tuesday, December 3, 2013, shall only take effect on February 24, 2014.

(Motion agreed to)

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Hon. John Duncan (Minister of State and Chief Government Whip, CPC): I move:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, in relation to the membership of the Standing Committee on International Trade, the Order of the House adopted on Tuesday, December 3, 2013, shall only take effect on February 10, 2014.

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Matthew Kellway: Mr. Speaker, there have been consultations among the parties, and if you seek it I hope you will find unanimous consent for the following motion.

I move that, in the opinion of the House the government should recognize February 21 as International Mother Language Day.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

* * *

PETITIONS

EDUCATION

Mr. John Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have three petitions.

The first one deals with the continuation of funding. The petitioners come from the Sunshine Coast, part of the riding that I am proud to represent. They plead that the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration continue to fund an ESL settlement assistance program, particularly important with the cost of ferries on the west coast.

● (1515)

SEX SELECTION

Mr. John Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the other two petitions deal with sex-selective pregnancy termination. They refer, among other things, to the fact that some 92% of Canadians believe that sex-selective pregnancy termination should be illegal. The petitioners call upon members of this House to support Motion No. 408.

SHARK FINNING

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition from thousands of Canadians across the country who are asking the government to take measures to stop the global practice of shark finning, and to ensure the responsible conservation and management of sharks. The petitioners call on the Government of Canada to immediately legislate a ban on the importation of sharks into Canada.

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present this petition on CCSVI. It will be four years in January since Canadians began travelling overseas for treatment for CCSVI. Canadians with MS are wondering how the government is going to judge the radically different CCSVI data from the east and west of Canada, and when there might be an update on the government's MS registry which was announced in March 2011.

The petitioners call upon the Minister of Health to undertake phase III clinical trials on an urgent basis, in multiple centres across Canada, and to require follow-up care.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Stephen Woodworth (Kitchener Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to present two petitions. The first calls for an extractive sector ombudsman to be legislated, totalling 138 signatures.

ELECTORAL REFORM

Mr. Stephen Woodworth (Kitchener Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition, with 102 signatures, calls upon the government to introduce a suitable form of representation after public consultation.

CANADIAN MUSEUM FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have three petitions to present.

The first concerns the Canadian Museum for Human Rights. The museum has indicated that unlike the Holocaust and indigenous suffering, the Holodomor will not be permanently and prominently recognized, but will rather be included in a side gallery. Canada's first national internment operations will also not be given a permanent exhibit.

The petitioners ask that the Holodomor and Canada's first national internment operations be permanently and prominently displayed at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights.

GENETICALLY MODIFIED ALFALFA

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition concerns genetically modified alfalfa. The petitioners are concerned that genetically modified alfalfa will affect the organic sector in Canada and will affect high protein feed for dairy cattle and other livestock.

The petitioners ask Parliament to impose a moratorium on the release of genetically modified alfalfa in order to properly review the impact on the farmers of Canada.

ASSISTED SUICIDE

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my final petition calls for the House of Commons to respect the will of Canadians by enacting new legislation that will provide clear guidelines to physicians, and provide competent, fully informed and grievously ill patients the option to make their own end of life decisions.

PROTECTION OF PRIVACY

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today with a petition from Canadians from across the country. It

Routine Proceedings

is important for the government to know that this particular issue affects a large number of people.

The petition is with regard to the United States Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act. The United States government is demanding that Canadian banks provide confidential financial information to the IRS in the United States. This will be implemented through an intergovernmental agreement between the governments of the United States and Canada.

The petitioners are calling upon the Government of Canada to protect the privacy and rights, including the charter rights, of Canadians.

The Speaker: I see that there are still several members rising. We have already gone through quite a few minutes on a few petitions, so I will remind members that they are to keep their comments very brief when they are presenting their petitions so we can accommodate as many as we can.

The hon. member for Langley.

IMPAIRED DRIVING

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the first petition that I have to present highlights the fact that 22-year-old Cassandra Kaulius was killed by a drunk driver. A group of people who have also lost loved ones to impaired drivers are calling for enhanced and stronger convictions for impaired driving.

• (1520)

SEX SELECTION

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition highlights the fact that discrimination against girls starts even before they are born. There are over 200 million girls missing in the world right now due to gendercide.

CANADA PENSION PLAN

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of my constituents in Newton—North Delta and also from the Municipal Pension Retirees' Association. They are calling on the Government of Canada to increase the death benefits payable to all pension holders to a non-taxable amount of \$4,000. The Canada pension plan death benefit amount has been capped at \$2,500 since the late 1970s.

EMPLOYMENT

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge Mr. Jack Ferrero. He is calling on the Minister of Employment and Social Development to enact legislation that would allow those who have been on or who are on disability to gain the right to return to work with an employer, get livelihoods up and running, and get and maintain certificates of competency in their chosen fields.

Routine Proceedings

INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, residents in my community of York South—Weston who endured terrible flooding last July 8, in part caused by inadequate and antiquated sewers, have signed a petition calling on the Government of Canada to immediately take steps to fund urgent infrastructure projects in order to upgrade our sewer systems and avoid future property damage.

EMPLOYMENT

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table a number of petitions today from Manitoba, Saskatchewan, southwestern Ontario and the Golden Horseshoe, including my community of Hamilton Mountain. The petitioners are asking the House of Commons to enact my bill, Bill C-201, on an urgent basis, because it does not make any sense that tradespeople be out of work in one area of the country while another region suffers from temporary skilled labour shortages.

LYME DISEASE

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present two petitions. The first is from residents of Thorndale, Ontario, as well as within my riding, Brentwood Bay, Victoria and Saanich. They are calling on the House to give favourable consideration to Bill C-442, my bill calling for a national lyme disease strategy. I am hearing from literally thousands of Canadians who hope that this bill can be passed to provide them some relief and some hope.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition comes from residents of Denman Island, Courtenay, Prince Rupert and other areas of Ontario. Petitioners call on the House to press the administration, the Privy Council, not to ratify the Canada-China investment treaty, as it is a significant threat to Canadian sovereignty.

[*Translation*]

MINING INDUSTRY

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to rise today to present two petitions.

In the first petition, the signatories point out that a number of communities in the south are reporting that their rights are not being respected and that their health and means of subsistence are being threatened by oppressive actions on the part of Canadian mining companies. They also point out that the Office of the Extractive Sector Corporate Social Responsibility Counsellor has too weak a mandate to resolve these issues and they are calling for the creation of a legal mechanism to establish an ombudsman for the extractive sector in Canada.

THE SENATE

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I also have the honour to present a petition from residents in my constituency, Laurier—Sainte-Marie, who join with the thousands and thousands of people demanding simply that the Senate be abolished.

[*English*]

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to rise to present a petition to the House calling for the creation of a legislated ombudsman mechanism for responsible mining. The petition, with over 150 signatories from Toronto—Danforth, was put together by the St. Ann's Roman Catholic Church development and peace chapter.

I am extremely grateful. They point out the problems with the existing office of the extractive sector for corporate and social responsibility and the fact that many Canadians, and many communities in the south, are concerned about the activities of Canadian mining companies.

CANADA PENSION PLAN

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have several petitions, but as time is tight I will limit it to one. Since we are debating pensions and the expansion of the Canada pension plan, this petition is from young workers in my riding who are calling on the government to enact a national urban worker strategy, which would, among other things, increase the pension and make it accessible for young people to imagine one day having a stable pension when they retire.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour today to rise and present two petitions signed by citizens from in and around my riding of Beaches—East York.

The first petition calls upon the Government of Canada to restore protection of the Don River, including its east and west branches, to guarantee the continued right to navigation on all of Canada's lakes and rivers and to commit to meaningful public consultation prior to approval of any project.

• (1525)

TORONTO ISLAND AIRPORT

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition calls upon the Government of Canada to block any changes to the tripartite agreement that would allow jet airplanes or extensions of the Toronto Island airport runways, to stop subsidizing Porter Airlines, and to compel the federal Toronto Port Authority to pay millions of dollars of back taxes owed to the people of Toronto.

* * *

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. 75 and 80.

Routine Proceedings

[Text]

Question No. 75—Mr. Paul Dewar:

With regard to the Technology Partnerships Canada (TPC) and Strategic Aerospace and Defence Initiative (SADI) programs of Industry Canada: (a) how many new jobs are estimated to have been created as a result of each program, broken down into direct and indirect results; (b) how many new jobs are estimated to have been produced in the TPC program areas of (i) environmental technologies, (ii) enabling technologies, (iii) aerospace and defence; (c) how many previously existing jobs are estimated to have been maintained as a result of each program, broken down into direct and indirect results; (d) how many previously existing jobs are estimated to have been maintained in the TPC program areas of (i) environmental technologies, (ii) enabling technologies, (iii) aerospace and defence; (e) which ten projects created the most jobs per government dollar disbursed through each program and how many new jobs did each of these projects produce; (f) which ten projects maintained the most jobs per government dollar disbursed through each program and how many jobs did each of these projects maintain; (g) which ten projects created the fewest jobs per government dollar disbursed through each program and how many new jobs did each of these projects create; (h) which ten projects maintained the fewest jobs per government dollar disbursed through each program and how many jobs did each of these projects maintain; (i) how many TPC projects were approved in fiscal year 2006-2007; (j) how many SADI projects, with what total disbursement value, have been approved in each fiscal year from 2007-2013; (k) what percentage of SADI-funded projects are subject to conditional repayment based on gross business revenues; (l) what percentage of the total disbursements made through SADI are subject to conditional repayment based on gross business revenues and what is the dollar value of this subset of total disbursements; (m) how many SADI-funded projects have been required to accept unconditional repayment and what is the total value of the disbursements for these projects in dollars and as a percentage of total disbursements; (n) what are the forecasted repayments through each program for each of the next ten fiscal years (from 2013-2014 to 2022-2023), divided into conditional and unconditional repayments; (o) what was the difference between the total conditional repayments expected one year prior to each of fiscal years 2006-2007 through 2012-2013 and the actual repayments in each of those years; and (p) what was the name and position of the individual who authorized the editing of the online SADI Project Portfolio on September 4, 2013, which removed information about the type, purpose, and disbursement period for each project?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a) to (h), the department cannot release data on jobs created or maintained on individual TPC and SADI projects because it is commercially confidential information.

With regard to (i), 18 TPC projects were approved in 2006-07 for a total authorized assistance of \$484.6 million.

With regard to (j), in 2007-08, one project was approved for \$19.6 million in SADI-authorized assistance. In 2008-09, nine projects were approved for \$395.4 million in SADI-authorized assistance. In 2009-10, six projects were approved for \$25.4 million in SADI-authorized assistance. In 2010-11, seven projects were approved for \$375.6 million in SADI-authorized assistance. In 2011-12, one project was approved for \$399,386 in SADI-authorized assistance. In 2012-13, five projects were approved for \$73.8 million in SADI-authorized assistance. In 2013-14, two projects have been approved to date for \$10.2 million in SADI-authorized assistance.

With regard to (k), 55% of SADI-funded projects are subject to conditional repayment terms based on gross business revenues.

With regard to (l), 59% of total disbursements made through SADI are for projects subject to conditional repayment based on gross business revenues. The dollar value of this subset is \$364.1 million of \$620.7 million in total disbursements.

With regard to (m), 14 projects under SADI have accepted unconditional repayment. The total value of the disbursement for

these projects is \$256.6 million, representing 41% of the total disbursements.

With regard to (n), Industry Canada regularly adjusts its short-term repayment expectations to reflect current economic realities and the progress of projects within its portfolio. Revised forecasts are published annually as part of the report on plans and priorities supplementary information tables, available at http://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/017.nsf/eng/h_07289.html.

With regard to (o), forecast repayment expectations are the amounts reported in reports on plans and priorities, available at http://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/017.nsf/eng/h_07306.html.

With regard to (p), as part of the redesigning of the website, the Industrial Technologies Office executive director authorized the elimination of information that was either no longer relevant, such as outdated industry statistics, or that was already available on the Industry Canada website.

The information about the type, purpose, and disbursement period for each project is available under the following link: http://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/icgc.nsf/eng/h_07018.html.

Question No. 80—Mr. Jean-François Fortin:

With regard to the preliminary report of the Commissioner of Official Languages on the closure of seven of 11 science libraries, made public on October 10, 2013: (a) does the Department of Fisheries and Oceans plan to follow Commissioner Graham Fraser's recommendation and keep the Maurice Lamontagne Institute library open by preserving its jobs and budget; and (b) does the Department plan to (i) establish, as part of the Department's upcoming cost reduction measures set out in Economic Action Plan 2013, mechanisms to genuinely consult, at the initial stage of the decision-making process, official language minority communities that may be affected by a decision, (ii) determine the impact of any future decisions affecting these communities as part of all decision-making and operational processes, (iii) take steps to compensate for the negative impact of future decisions when they are likely to be detrimental to the development and vitality of the official language minority communities they affect?

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, the preliminary investigation by the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages concluded that the new structural model for DFO's scientific libraries does not restrict services to the public or impact the employees under part IV, communications with and services to the public, and part V, language of work, of the Official Languages Act, and the nine complaints received are deemed unfounded under these two parts of the act. The Commissioner of Official Languages has provided recommendations to the department with regard to part VII of the act, advancement of English and French. Fisheries and Oceans Canada supports the promotion of Canada's national languages and the development of both language communities across this country. In this regard, the department has provided comments to the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages on the preliminary investigation report. Discussions are ongoing, and we look forward to receiving the final report.

Routine Proceedings

[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. 76, 78, 79, 82, 83, 84, 87 to 94, 96, 97 and 99 could be made orders for returns, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the aforementioned questions be made orders for return and that they be tabled immediately?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 76—Hon. John McCallum:

With regard to the \$3.1 billion identified in paragraph 8.21 of the Spring 2013 Report of the Auditor General of Canada, in which years and on which pages can the money be found in the Public Accounts of Canada?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 78—Hon. John McCallum:

With regard to processing times for visa and immigration applications, what is, by year and using the 80% of applications completed benchmark, the average wait time and success rate, including total number of applications received and approved for each processing centre, for: (a) Family Class, specifically (i) spouses and partners, (ii) children and dependents, (iii) parents and grandparents; (b) Permanent Economic Residents, specifically, (i) federal skilled workers, (ii) Quebec skilled workers, (iii) the provincial nominee program, broken down by province, (iv) live-in caregivers, (v) Canadian experience class, (vi) federal business immigrants, (vii) Quebec business immigrants; (c) Temporary Economic Residents, specifically (i) International Students, (ii) Temporary Foreign Workers; (d) Temporary Resident Visas, specifically (i) Temporary Resident Visa, (ii) Work Visa, (iii) ten-year Super Visa?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 79—Hon. John McCallum:

With regard to briefing documents prepared for ministers or their staff, from April 1, 2013 to present, what are: (i) the dates, (ii) the titles or subject-matters, (iii) the department's internal tracking number?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 82—Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet:

With regard to the Ontario-Quebec Continental Gateway initiative: (a) was there a formal agreement with Quebec with regard to this initiative; (b) if there was an agreement, when will details of the programming be made public; (c) are the budget envelopes set aside for this initiative still available; (d) does the government plan to allocate a specific budget envelope to projects proposed by the Quebec government; (e) what projects have been proposed by the Quebec government; (f) what projects proposed by the Quebec government have received government approval; (g) what impact will the recently announced projects to improve the movement of goods through the Windsor-Detroit corridor have on the overall budget envelope; (h) will funds from the Ontario-Quebec Continental Gateway initiative be used to build the new Champlain Bridge?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 83—Ms. Megan Leslie:

With regard to romance scams taking place in Canada: (a) how many romance scams are estimated to have taken place in Canada, broken down by year from 2006 to 2013; (b) how much money is estimated to have been lost to romance scams, broken down by year from 2006 to 2013; (c) how many romance scams are estimated to go unreported per year; (d) what resources have the RCMP dedicated towards this portfolio; (e) how many convictions have resulted from police investigations into

romance scams; (f) what has the government done to educate the public about romance scams; (g) what avenues are available for Canadians to report romance scams; (h) what measures are in place to support the emotional and psychological well-being of romance scam victims; (i) what proportion of romance scam victims end up recovering their financial losses; and (j) what proportion of people convicted of fraud related to romance scams operated from within Canada?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 84—Ms. Megan Leslie:

With regard to single-use bottled water by the government in fiscal year 2010-2011, 2011-2012 and 2012-2013: (a) what are the total expenditures; (b) what amount was spent by each department or agency; (c) what were the total expenditures in facilities where access to safe drinking water was readily available, by department or agency; (d) with respect to the above figures, how much was spent, by departmental or agency, in the National Capital Region; (e) what was the breakdown by province for such services; (f) what is the number of employees, by province; and (g) what is the number of drinking water fountains that service these employees, by province?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 87—Ms. Joyce Murray:

With regard to government communications since March 20, 2013: (a) for each press release containing the phrase "Harper government" issued by any government department, agency, office, Crown corporation, or other government body, what is the (i) headline or subject line, (ii) date, (iii) file or code-number, (iv) subject-matter; (b) for each such press release, was it distributed (i) on the web site of the issuing department, agency, office, Crown corporation, or other government body, (ii) on Marketwire, (iii) on Canada Newswire, (iv) on any other commercial wire or distribution service, specifying which service; and (c) for each press release distributed by a commercial wire or distribution service mentioned in (b)(ii) through (b)(iv), what was the cost of using the service?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 88—Ms. Joyce Murray:

With regard to current members of the Canadian Forces: (a) how many have been diagnosed with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), (i) broken down by element, (ii) broken down by trade, (iii) what percentage this (total) number comprises; (b) how many have been prescribed medication; (c) what medications have been prescribed; (d) how many doctors within the Canadian Forces are qualified to make a PTSD diagnosis; (e) for every Canadian Forces base, how many doctors per base are qualified to diagnose PTSD; (f) for every Canadian Forces base, how many doctors per base are qualified to treat PTSD; (g) what is the average length of treatment received by Canadian Forces members for PTSD (average amount of sessions a Canadian Forces member has with doctors, psychologists and other health care professionals); and (h) how many of those soldiers diagnosed with PTSD also suffered a physical injury that resulted from combat in Afghanistan?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 89—Ms. Joyce Murray:

With regard to the government marijuana-eradication program done under the name "Operation Sabot" that included the Canadian Armed Forces, the RCMP and some provincial authorities: (a) what is the annual cost of this operation for each department; (b) what is the number of personnel affected by this operation and the cost of it; (c) what types and numbers of vehicles were allocated to the operation and at what cost; (d) what number of plants were seized or destroyed annually with this operation; (e) how many people were injured during the operation; and (f) what is the amount of federal money transferred to any provincial authorities to support this operation?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 90—Hon. Mark Eyking:

With regard to government advertising, what are the file numbers for any post-campaign evaluations for any advertising campaign by any department, agency, or crown corporation, relating to (i) any phase of the Economic Action Plan, (ii) the War of 1812 anniversary?

Business of Supply

(Return tabled)

Question No. 91—**Hon. Mark Eyking:**

With regard to ministers speaking at the Economic Club of Canada, broken down by minister since 2006: (a) how many times did each minister speak; (b) for each speech, what was (i) the date, (ii) the topic; and (c) what were the costs of all travel and accommodations for the minister and any accompanying staff, broken down by speech and individual expense?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 92—**Ms. Yvonne Jones:**

With regard to fisheries enforcement by the government: (a) what fines have been issued since 2006, broken down by (i) infraction, (ii) date, (iii) trial outcome, where applicable, (iv) fine amount paid, (v) the recipient of the funds from the fine; (b) for each trial in (a)(iii), what is (i) the name of the prosecutor, (ii) the name of the Judge, (iii) the initial fine, (iv) the penalty assessed by the Court; and (c) what conservation groups or other organisations, excluding the Receiver General, have received any proceeds from any such enforcement actions and what justification exists for their receipt of these proceeds?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 93—**Mr. Hoang Mai:**

With regard to funding allocated to the constituency of Brossard—La Prairie from fiscal year 2002-2003 to the fiscal year ending in 2013: (a) what was the total amount of government funding, broken down by department or agency; and (b) what initiatives were funded and, for each, what was (i) the amount awarded, (ii) the date the funding was awarded?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 94—**Mr. Jean-François Larose:**

With regard to transfer payments to non-profit organizations (excluding hospitals and universities) and the government's operational spending (O&M) to manage these transfers: (a) what have been the government's total expenditures in this area since fiscal year 2006-2007, broken down by fiscal year; (b) what has been the break-down of the government's expenditures since fiscal year 2006-2007 on internal government operations, on grants, and on contributions, broken down by fiscal year; (c) what has been the breakdown of expenditures by department and agency, broken down by program area, by fiscal year and by nature of expenditure (for example, grants, contributions, O&M); (d) what fiscal changes (for example, legislative changes to the Income Tax Act) have been put into place since 2006-2007 that directly impact the not-for-profit sector and what has been the financial result of each of these changes (for example, amount of costs or savings to the Treasury by fiscal year since the implementation of each change); (e) what cuts to transfer payments were made during each round of the four-year cycle of Strategic Reviews and as a result of the Strategic and Operational Review (also known as Deficit Reduction Action Plan), broken down by i) department and agency, ii) program activity, iii) nature of expenditure (for example, G&C, Capital, O&M); (f) how much has the government spent on the new social finance approach and what are its projected spending plans for the next few years, including a breakdown of this spending on special pilot projects discussed in HRSDC's 2013-2014 Report on Plans and Priorities—i.e., to test social partnership and social finance approaches in the area of literacy, youth and Aboriginal labour market programming, as well as through the Foreign Credential Recognition Loans Pilot; (g) which not-for-profit organizations and private firms have been chosen to test the new approach and what is the break-down of government expenditures to date and spending plans on each project, broken down by not-for-profit organization and by private firm?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 96—**Mr. Philip Toone:**

With regard to Fisheries and Oceans Canada's capital assets: (a) what are these assets and their current use, broken down by (i) province, (ii) municipality, (iii) complete address; (b) which ones were sold or transferred by the department over the past five years, broken down by (i) year, (ii) province, (iii) municipality, (iv) complete address; (c) to whom and for how much were the assets referred to in (b) sold or transferred; and (d) to whom is the department planning to sell or transfer in the next five years, broken down by (i) year, (ii) province, (iii) municipality, (iv) complete address?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 97—**Mr. Philip Toone:**

With regard to the Canada Summer Jobs program: (a) what were the actual expenditures between 2001 and today, broken down by (i) year, (ii) constituency, (iii) province, (iv) territory; (b) how many recipients have there been between 2001 and today, broken down by (i) year, (ii) constituency, (iii) territory; and (c) how many summer jobs have been generated between 2001 and today, broken down by (i) year, (ii) constituency, (iii) province, (iv) territory?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 99—**Mr. Jack Harris:**

With regard to medical releases from the Canadian Forces, for the past five years, for each year: (a) what is the total number of medical releases; (b) what was the number of medical releases by province; and (c) in terms of year of service when a member is given a medical release, what was the number of medical releases by each year of service from one to forty years of service?

(Return tabled)

[English]

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?**Some hon. members:** Agreed**GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—CANADA AND QUEBEC PENSION PLANS

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to continue to speak on a motion that calls for an incremental increase and an improvement to our CPP. Despite the arguments we heard earlier from across the aisle, we know this is common sense, backed by sound economic arguments.

I want to make clear today what we are proposing. We are proposing to gradually phase in an increase in CPP and QPP benefits, not the shock and awe that my friends over the aisle would like us to believe. It is also a position that is supported by economists, bankers, actuaries and all kinds of people.

We think the GIS needs to lift low-income seniors out of poverty.

We absolutely believe the age of eligibility needs to go back to 65. It is my understanding that we are the only party to have that position, which is a good position. It does not mean people have to retire. Rather it means that if they can no longer work beyond age 65, they will have that social assurance.

We need to tighten up legislation to protect the pensions of workers when a company is facing bankruptcy, leaving the country, being sold or undergoing corporate restructuring.

I do not know about my colleagues across the way, but I deal with this last point constantly in my riding. It comes up over and over again when people are so worried about the future of their pensions.

Business of Supply

We also hear a lot from the other side about how the NDP does not know what it is talking about when it comes to the economy. The NDP knows how the economy works. We have members of Parliament sitting on this side who have managed portfolios, who have dealt with money in the billions of dollars in other parts of their lives and who are experienced parliamentarians.

I am beginning to wonder about the economic argument or ability of my colleagues across the aisle. I will quote some statistics released today. The government across the way is not prone to listening to experts. Nor is it prone to listening to sound research or making decisions based on that research.

Today, Statistics Canada stated that the CPP grew at a rate of 13.7%. Do people have pension funds or retirement savings that they are handling on their own that can give them that kind of return? I would say categorically no. Right now when people put their money into the bank, they are lucky to get 1%.

During that same time period, individual registered savings plans grew by 8%. That is a difference of 5.7%.

We on this side of the House understand economies of scale. When we have larger amounts of money to invest, we benefit from those economies of scale. We understand that. We want to know what the barrier is that is preventing my colleagues who sit across the way from understanding those very simple numbers.

The Globe and Mail has also noted that when we look at a long-term trend, and we all like trends, especially ones that go in the right direction, we have a good news story. Our good news story is our Canada pension plan and its viability, which has been recognized worldwide by the OECD and others. The Canada Pension Plan Investment Board, not the NDP, has provided remarkable returns in virtually every year except the one year after the economic downturn of 2008. Over the last 10 years—

● (1530)

The Speaker: Order, please. I have been trying to get the hon. member's attention as she is, unfortunately, out of time. We will move on to questions and comments.

The hon. Minister of State for Western Economic Diversification.

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Minister of State (Western Economic Diversification), CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague opposite made the implication that she knew the economy and that her speech was based on sound research. Therefore, as such, I would like to ask her the following.

What mortality assumptions as well as the size of the worker base were used to calculate the cost of the program included in the motion? What were the other actuarial assumptions used to show the viability of the plan? Does the motion include the assumption of a balanced budget? Could the member explain the difference between how CPP is funded versus the OAS?

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims: Mr. Speaker, we should remember it was the actuary of the Canada pension plan who said that this plan was viable, that the plan had great returns and that it was one of the areas we should be moving toward improving.

The actuaries have that data and they study and analyze it. They look at long-term trends, mortality rates and all of those things.

Whether it is the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, pension experts, or university researchers, they are looking at the data and those long-term contributions.

I absolutely know how the OAS is very different from CPP. I believe both need to be increased. However, the CPP is what we are here to debate today and it can hold an incremental increase.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, earlier today on the motion, the member for Toronto—Danforth stood in his place and he seemed to be a little upset with the fact that he was being challenged on what the NDP position was with regard to the CPP. He said that it had no plans on doubling the CPP, but it may be an option.

I have a quote from the member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, who stated that, “The NDP plan is quite simple. It aims to double Canada pension plan benefits with minimal increases to the contributions”.

Here is another quote from the election platform of the NDP back in 2011, which states, “work with the provinces to double your public pensions”.

Is it the platform that is wrong, or has the NDP changed its platform, or is the member for Toronto—Danforth wrong?

● (1535)

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims: Mr. Speaker, my colleague's question is very good and I appreciate the opportunity to answer it.

We have goals, and because of the cost of living and all the other expenses that seniors have to bear, the CPP will have to go up. The proposal we are putting forward and what we are talking about are incremental changes. We are not talking about doubling it overnight. We are saying that the plan can carry incremental changes and we should be putting those in because it is the right thing to do. If CPP should double in 5, 10 or 15 years in the future, maybe the incremental changes could take it there.

When we look at CPP and the lack of increases to those payments in real terms, we have to listen to the researchers and economists when they tell us that Canadians who retire experience a huge drop in income and a growing number of seniors are living in poverty.

This is a sure way, the cheapest way and the safest way to reduce poverty and improve life for our seniors.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, every time over the last eight years when the New Democrats have talked about the pension crisis, all the Conservatives start to laugh.

When I go home, I talk to people who are 68 and 69 who cannot afford their house anymore, and I have seen guys going back to work underground in the mines at 70. Why does my hon. colleague think every Conservative over there thinks the idea of people being able to retire in dignity is something to be laughed at?

First, the Conservatives raise the OAS to 67. When we talk about pension reform, they think it is some kind of joke. I would ask my hon. colleague if she thinks perhaps they are not living in the real world where ordinary Canadians live.

Business of Supply

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague, a very hard-working member of Parliament and a very passionate speaker in the House.

He asks a very good question. I have no answer except that I am terribly perplexed. I hear these concerns in my riding, and surely the Conservatives must hear them in theirs, almost every weekend when I work at home. I do not think I have had a weekend when a senior has not talked to me about the cost of living and how hard it is to heat, eat, et cetera.

Mr. Jim Hillyer (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to address the motion before us today.

The hon. members of the House may differ on solutions, but I am sure we agree that we need to look, continuously, for ways to improve Canada's retirement income system. That does not just mean only looking at the government income system, but for ways, in general, that Canadians can have a comfortable and dignified retirement.

Canada's seniors deserve our gratitude and support. Our government recognizes they have worked hard to build a better country for future generations. Let me assure the hon. members that Canada's retirement system is one that has served Canadians well. Indeed, we have one of the strongest in the world.

Canada's retirement income system has been recognized by expert groups, like the OECD, as a model that succeeds in reducing poverty among Canadian seniors and provided high levels of income replacement to retired Canadians.

Taken together, our system is based on a balanced mix of public and private responsibility, as well as compulsory and voluntary vehicles that provide a basic minimum benefit for Canadians, ensure a basic level of earnings replacement for working Canadians and offer additional opportunities for voluntary retirement saving.

Our system both supports and draws upon the strength of our sound financial sector.

[*Translation*]

In fact, Canada's financial sector remains strong. The World Economic Forum has ranked our banking system as the soundest in the world for the sixth year in a row. In addition, Canada is rightfully recognized for the responsible management of our economic and financial sectors. It is therefore not surprising that Canada continues to have the highest credit ratings, with continued upside forecasts, according to all the main rating agencies. Canada is the only G7 country with that status. We are coming to grips with the debt and we are on track to balance the budget in 2015.

While the NDP and the Liberals continue to put forward dangerous spending plans, our government is reducing expenses and making the tough economic decisions that will contribute to Canada's long-term prosperity and economic growth. Even more importantly, our pension scheme is also one of our economic objectives for jobs and growth.

● (1540)

[*English*]

The success of this model rests on three solid pillars. The first comprises of old age security and guaranteed income supplement program which provide a basic minimum income for seniors. The second pillar is the Canada pension plan and the Quebec pension plan. The third pillar provides tax-assisted private savings opportunities to help and encourage Canadians to accumulate additional savings for retirement.

A couple of weeks ago I received a letter from a constituent who had just turned 65. She was unhappy about the state of retirement. Her request was not that we increase pension fees and government pension plans. She knew she could not turn back the clock, but said that if she could, she would have governments encourage people to take care of more of their retirement through private opportunities and would encourage us to encourage young people today to do that.

In the rest of my time today, I would like to concentrate on the strengths of the CPP and illustrate why the NDP plan to expand the CPP is just not in the best interests of Canadian workers or employers.

Let me begin with a look at our current situation. The CPP is a mandatory public defined benefit pension plan and provides a basic level of earnings replacement for all Canadian workers. It provides a defined benefit in retirement based on an individual's career earnings as well as ancillary benefits like survivor benefits. They are financed by employer and employee contributions, the contribution rate being 9.9% of earnings shared equally between employees and employers.

Operating at arm's-length from government, the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board is responsible for prudently investing CPP contributions to serve the best interests of CPP contributors and beneficiaries.

[*Translation*]

The CPPIB is one of world's largest pension funds. On December 31, 2012, its net assets were \$172.6 billion. With prudent management of the fund for the benefit of current and future members, the CPPIB invests around the world. Indeed, its mandate is to invest in the best interests of contributors and beneficiaries.

That is why it is important for the CPPIB to be diversified in its exposure to risk. This includes greater diversification worldwide, ensuring that the revenue from overseas investments comes back to Canada.

Our government is committed to the healthy management and sustainability of the Canada pension plan and to strengthen it as much as possible. For example, at the moment, only Canadians can sit on the CPPIB's 12-member board of directors. At this stage in its development, the board of directors would benefit from the contribution of foreign talent.

Business of Supply

[English]

That is why economic action plan 2013 announced that our government would consult with provinces on permitting a limited number of qualified persons who are not resident in Canada to serve on the board of directors of the CPPIB. Permitting a limited number of qualified non-residents to sit on the board of directors would enable the board to provide the most effective oversight of the CPPIB's activities in the context of a rapidly changing global economy.

This makes sense when considering how important it is that the CPP be diversified in terms of risk exposure and not be exclusively localized to the Canadian economy. This is especially prudent in our current expansion into trade throughout the world.

Let me now turn to the ongoing issue of expanding the CPP to ensure its future sustainability.

To begin, any expansion would require the support of two-thirds of the provinces representing two-thirds of the Canadian population, as well as the federal government. Two-thirds of the provinces plus two-thirds of the Canadian population and the federal government all have to agree on the expansion.

At the meetings of the federal, provincial, and territorial finance ministers in December 2010, 2011, and again in 2012, there was no such agreement on a potential expansion. We could talk about it and we could pass a motion on it, but we would not be able to do it anyway if we do not get that support.

Indeed, a number of provinces expressed concerns about the prospective economic impact of higher payroll taxes on workers and their employers at a time when the global economy remains uncertain. Our government shares the concerns of small businesses, employees, and certain provinces over increasing costs during a fragile global recovery.

The decision as to whether to expand the CPP must be made with Canada's economic situation and the best interests of Canadian workers and employers kept in mind. The motion that is being proposed by the hon. member for Victoria does not meet this threshold. Indeed, despite the fact that Canada's economic recovery remains fragile, the NDP continues to call for a radical plan to increase payroll tax, which would stunt our economic growth and kill up to 70,000 jobs. Clearly, now is not the time for such an expansion to the CPP. To be frank, this plan would be too risky.

However, if members do not believe me, we can listen to advice from those who would be directly affected by the CPP expansion.

Dan Kelly, president of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, puts forth the following, which the NDP might find interesting:

CFIB's research found that earlier proposals to increase CPP/QPP premiums would kill between 700,000 and 1.2 million person years of employment. ... Small firms believe that the economy cannot manage a significant increase in payroll taxes.

• (1545)

[Translation]

It does not make sense to want to add to the tax burden of employers and employees. It seems clear that we need to do more to

properly study the impact of a CPP expansion and determine if that would be appropriate, considering the repercussions this would have on families, businesses and communities.

I would remind the hon. member that the idea of a CPP expansion is not a new one. However, not everyone agrees on this idea.

[English]

Let me make it clear again that consensus is critical before moving forward with CPP expansion. While analysis is important, expansion at this time does not have agreement from the majority of provinces. Allow me to provide hon. members with what provinces from across the country are saying on the issue of increasing CPP contribution rates at this time.

Nova Scotia Premier Stephen McNeil has said:

We have some issues about what that will mean to small business owners in this province, and what is the impact on low-income Nova Scotians and Canadians.

Saskatchewan Premier Brad Wall noted that the CPP expansion would not be something they would support at this time, saying, "We're 'No for now'. ... Now's not the time for contribution changes or increases".

There is more. The British Columbia finance department spokesperson, Jamie Edwardson, said: "B.C. believes pension reforms should not be undertaken before the economy has recovered from the impacts of the recent recession".

Our government shares these concerns. We believe that before new spending initiatives are contemplated, the provincial, territorial, and federal governments should get their respective fiscal situations in order. Rather than supporting an initiative that does not have the necessary support to proceed, the NDP should support the PRPPs, something all provinces have committed to implement.

While the NDP has been focusing on expanding the CPP, it may not have noticed that an estimated 60% of Canadians do not have access to a workplace pension plan. This is precisely why Canada's finance ministers decided to prioritize the PRPP framework over other options, such as expanding the CPP. It was because it was considered the most effective and targeted way to address the lack of retirement savings among modest- and middle-income individuals, who make up the vast majority of the population of the country.

PRPPs will significantly help small and medium-sized businesses and their employees, who until now have not had access to a large-scale, low-cost private pension option. By pooling pension savings, these new plans will be low cost, as the administration costs will be spread over a large group of people.

Despite the consensus among provincial finance ministers, the NDP did not support these private retirement pension plans. Despite what it wants Canadians to believe, it clearly does not support actual measures that will strengthen Canada's retirement income system. Indeed, when given the chance to support PRPPs, New Democrats voted against our government's legislation, the very legislation that established the federal framework for PRPPs. Rather than support actual reform, they are content to advance proposals that pose risks to Canadians and to Canada's economic recovery.

Business of Supply

As Laura Jones of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business points out:

A mandatory CPP increase...is a bad idea. An increase in the CPP tax takes more money out of employees' and employers' pockets. Where will the money come from? Employees may be tempted to lower contributions to their RRSPs, or reduce their mortgage payments. ... Worse still, small businesses report that a mandatory CPP increase would force many to lower wages and even reduce their workforce.

That is the ultimate problem, not just with this suggestion but with a lot of the economic suggestions from the NDP. It fails to take into account that all money has to come from somewhere. We would like to promise everyone a loaf of bread, but if the bakers are standing in line for their free loaf, we might have some empty shelves.

• (1550)

At the end of the day, we have to find a way to pay for all these things, and right now we believe that the more money in Canadians' pockets, the better. More money in employees' pockets and more money in employers' pockets ultimately will not just help the economy today, but will help the economy in the future, including our future retirement.

[Translation]

Clearly, Canadian families cannot afford a drastic expansion of CPP, which would cost them even more. They cannot afford that, nor can small business owners, who could be faced with increased payroll taxes.

As a prudent and responsible government, we share the concerns of small business owners and employees who simply cannot afford such a proposal.

[English]

Our government has gone to great lengths to ensure that Canada is in an enviable fiscal position. However, as we have said repeatedly, we are not out of the woods yet. Global demand has softened, and the prices of many Canadian exports, particularly resources, are down. Furthermore, the sovereign debt crisis in the euro area continues to weigh on consumer and business confidence, and south of the border, a slow recovery poses a significant threat to the Canadian economy.

While gains in jobs are being made, they are modest, and there are still too many Canadians who are unemployed. That is why our government will remain squarely focused on job creation and economic growth. That will remain our priority.

We all want a stronger retirement system. However, we must not make changes that could have detrimental effects on our fragile economy today and thereby a devastating impact on today's retirement system and the retirement system of the future. There is no retirement plan if there is no job.

Our economic action plan is working. The unemployment level is at the lowest level since December 2008, and just last week it was announced that 21,600 net new jobs were created in the month of November. That is well over a million new jobs since the lowest level of the recession in December 2008. How are we doing this? It is by keeping taxes low and implementing positive job creating measures.

An expansion of the CPP would increase payroll taxes, reduce wages, and kill jobs. In a recent survey by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, 65% of businesses said that they would freeze or cut salaries if CPP were increased, 48% said they would reduce investments in their businesses, and 42% said they would decrease the number of employees. These are important and concerning numbers.

Even for places in my own riding, a modest increase in CPP would result in more money being taken out of the pockets of employees and would force employers to cut jobs, hours, and wages.

• (1555)

[Translation]

Instead, our government has a prudent and responsible plan. We will not proceed without thinking about the possible serious economic impact of such an expansion.

We will continue to try to identify all the factors that could help us better understand the possibilities and risks associated with the CPP expansion. The Minister of Finance will discuss this with his provincial and territorial counterparts at next weeks' meeting.

This is a complex issue that will have real consequences for Canadians. We need to fully understand the economic framework in which such an expansion would take place.

[English]

The Canada pension plan is sustainable as it is at its current contribution rate, and while the NDP continues proposing its radical economic schemes, our focus must and will continue to be sustainability and long-term manageability of Canadians' retirement system, including jobs today.

Simply put, with the economic recovery still fragile, we do not believe that now is the time to increase costs on workers and employers. To do so would benefit no one.

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I find it disturbing that my colleague from Lethbridge would label a plan that we have proposed as radical when it is that of the former chief actuary of the Canada pension plan we are proposing and it is that of many provinces. As an example, Prince Edward Island's Minister of Finance has one variation on the theme, and the like.

The member said, quoting CFIB research, that small firms believe they cannot afford an increase in payroll taxes, but this is not a payroll tax, according to every economist I have consulted. That is a myth. It is a contribution like any other part of the employee compensation package. Pension contributions are part of that, and employers are essentially paying into an insurance plan.

If the hon. member says we cannot afford this now, could he please inform the House when he believes we can? What is the exact number he is waiting for? What is the GDP per cent growth he thinks is required?

Mr. Jim Hillyer: Mr. Speaker, throughout my speech, I talked about the fact that now is not the time. I never said that there is going to be a time when we want to radically increase Canada pension plan contributions.

Business of Supply

It is not just a matter of GDP. It is a matter of the economic climate of the country and of the world. If at some future point future governments and future populations feel that it is time to start reducing people's take-home pay, because they feel that it would be a good investment, and they want it done through the government instead of through their own private plans, that will be up to them. However, right now, we are focused on today's economy, and we will continue to be.

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question has to do with PRPPs. I do not understand why the hon. member is so keen on them, when *The Globe and Mail*, in an editorial, just yesterday, asked why we would have yet another voluntary plan, when only one in four Canadians puts one penny into an RRSP. Why would they put more into this? Second, it is a whole lot more costly than the supplementary CPP plan the Liberals have proposed.

If the Liberal plan for supplementary CPP is both a lot cheaper than PRPPs and will get a whole lot more participation through auto-enrolment, why is he favouring PRPPs as opposed to something that is evidently superior with respect to both cost and participation and that does not have any required increase in premiums?

• (1600)

Mr. Jim Hillyer: Mr. Speaker, whatever the percentage of people who do and do not participate in RRSPs, the PRPPs are for another demographic. I was self-employed for most of my career. A lot of my friends and family and people I have worked with have been self-employed and have not had the opportunity to invest with tax deductions, as people with RRSPs do. This would give them that opportunity.

The voluntary nature of any investment program is not just wise; it is a matter of principle that people should be able to decide how to manage their own affairs and how to prepare for their own futures.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I notice that the opposition supply day motion calls for an increase to the pension benefit but makes no mention of the increase in premiums that would be necessary to fund that increase in benefit levels.

It is important for members in the House to realize that when the Canada pension plan was first introduced in 1966, premiums represented 3.6% of annual earnings. By 1997, in the pay-as-you-go system, premiums had risen to 6% of annual income. The pension plan at that point was underfunded, and the projection was that premiums would rise to 10.1% by 2016 and then to 15% or so beyond that. To address the concerns about skyrocketing premiums, the government decided to move away from a pay-as-you-go system toward a system in which we would earn surpluses every year to put away for future use. Today we are at 9.9% of annual income in premiums paid to the fund.

What impact on the economy would an increase have on employers and employees throughout this country?

Mr. Jim Hillyer: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the historical context, which demonstrates the trend that occurs if we do not carefully look at how the government increases its take from people. It has been shown through experience that when that is done, it hurts the economy. By doing even more than has already been done, it would

jump from 3.6% of earnings. Theoretically, that should stay the same throughout the years, because it is compared with the average income. The fact is that we have had to triple it over the years, and now are talking about doing it again.

We can look around the world and see the countries that have tried to tax, borrow, and spend their way out of all their financial problems. We can see those that leave some money in people's own pockets to resolve their problems. Historically and today, the second model has proven to be far more effective. That is why we are opposed to the motion today.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan (Scarborough—Rouge River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak in support of my colleague's motion to increase the Canada and Quebec pension plans for all Canadians.

Canada is facing a retirement security crisis. Today's seniors just do not have the money they need to retire. Nearly one-third of Canadians will face a drop of 20% or more in their living standards by retirement. Also, nearly one-third of our workforce, as many as 5.8 million Canadians, are facing a steep decline in their standard of living upon retirement. As per usual, with the changes by the current Conservative government, young Canadians are left with a more dire situation to deal with. As *The Globe and Mail* recently reported:

A CIBC Economics report warned this year that middle-income Canadians are not saving enough for retirement. The report said the situation "will be at its worst decades from now," when people born in the 1970s and 1980s retire and face a drop of 20 per cent or more in living standards.

Without an increase to CPP, Canada is facing a retirement security crisis. For seniors living in poverty, transfer payments make up over 90% of their incomes. This is not sustainable. Canadians make contributions to the CPP throughout their working lives, and they expect it to count once they reach retirement age. We can do better.

I must also mention that I will be sharing my time with the member for Toronto—Danforth.

Unfortunately, the reality is that Canada cannot afford to not invest in improving the lives of our seniors. As the Conservatives hand out billions of dollars to well-connected insiders and buy fighter jets that our forces say will not meet their military needs, they are ignoring the very real challenges Canada's aging population is facing.

CPP is stable. Many experts are now advocating a phased-in increase in the Canada pension plan and the Quebec pension plan, the CPP and the QPP, as the most practical and effective way to help ensure the retirement security of Canadians. As the government's own data show, a modest increase in CPP premiums could finance a substantial increase in benefits.

The simple truth is this: a great many Canadians are not saving enough for retirement today. The provincial governments, the Canadian Labour Congress, and various financial experts have all been calling on the federal government to move forward with plans to increase the CPP.

Business of Supply

What other experts would the Conservatives like people to ignore? The chief executive officer of the CIBC, Gerald McCaughey, has been speaking out about the need to improve our public pensions. The Conservatives would rather people ignore what they have said, that enhancing the CPP would help boost savings and that increases to the CPP are “a way for Canadians to make the big investments and get better returns with relatively low cost”.

The Conservatives must be thinking, “What do those socialists at the bank know about managing the economy anyway?” Everybody is a socialist except them.

The Canadian Association of Retired Persons has been campaigning for increases to CPP for at least the last three years. In its own words, it has said:

It has been three years since the finance ministers acknowledged that Canadians were not saving enough for retirement and that the existing vehicles were inadequate. Most important, they acknowledged that government had a role to play. Think tanks and pension experts have had enough time to line up behind CARP's call to enhance the CPP. There is no reason to delay this any longer.

Even the PBO, the Parliamentary Budget Officer, has said that CPP is stable. Instead of listening to their own data, the Conservatives would rather use the CPP to instill fear in the hearts of Canadians. On one day, the Conservatives say that the Canadian economy is strong, but today the Conservatives are telling Canadians that the economy is so weak that there is no way we could increase the CPP.

The New Democrats, along with the provinces, are calling for a gradual phasing in of increased benefits in an affordable, sustainable manner. The increases to the CPP and QPP in 1997 have been shown to have not hampered growth in our economy. The Conservatives would like Canadians to believe that if they are re-elected in 2015, then, and only then, will they start fixing what is broken. To be honest, 2015 could just be too late. The problems may be too big to fix. There is a crisis in retirement security we need to tackle today, but we must do so in a responsible manner.

● (1605)

How dire is the retirement security crisis in Canada? Canadians used to be able to count on a workplace pension plan in retirement. Now, more than ever before, seniors are left to depend more on their private savings, especially in comparison with other OECD countries.

A recent OECD survey on pensions shows that the number of seniors, especially women, who live in poverty has been rising in Canada under the Conservatives, even as it is dropping in 20 other OECD countries.

Depending on the poverty measure used, the before-tax income for elderly couples ranges from \$14,700 to \$22,000. For unattached seniors, the average before-tax income ranges from \$11,550 to \$16,900.

In my community of Scarborough—Rouge River, just over 12% of our population is over the age of 65. That number will only increase. The average income in my community is \$28,328. This really does not paint a rosy picture of the retirement security of the people living in my community. Many families in my riding who

came to Canada to invest in their futures soon may find that their investment will come up short.

I am sure we all know of at least one senior who is working past the age of retirement. I want to share a personal story, if I may.

My mother has been working in a warehouse for many years, for over 25 years. She is around the age of retirement now, but she has to keep working. Without a full-time job, my mother would not be able to pay for medication that she and my father need. I am so proud of my mother for being the breadwinner and for taking care of our family, but she should not have to put off her retirement for fear of retiring into poverty. This should not be a decision that any senior needs to make. Life should not be this way for our seniors in Canada. That includes my mother.

In fact, it is senior women who are really feeling the crunch today. No matter what measurement or indicator we use, women make up the clear majority of poor seniors, at 70%. We know that senior women who live alone rely on the government for 62% of their income. While men are more likely to have private pensions, government pension plans are the major source of income for women over the age of 75.

What about the rest of Canadians? What about Canada's future, our youth? With youth unemployment at record highs today, many young people do not have the luxury of thinking about retirement. They are too busy worrying about paying the bills today to think about their retirement many decades away.

As I touched upon earlier, nearly a third of our workforce is facing a steep decline in their standard of living upon retirement. In the case of our young Canadians, that number would be even steeper. We need to make changes now so that we can deal with the changes of Canada's aging population before it is just too late.

With all this support from grassroots activists and from our banks, with increasing demand, with all the facts in front of us, and with the possibility of such a harsh reality for our young people, why do the Conservatives not want to increase CPP and QPP? I just do not get it.

It was just last year that the finance minister agreed to move forward on increasing CPP and QPP benefits. Our finance minister never wants to disappoint us, but he seems to do that quite frequently. The finance minister even promised to meet with the provinces and territories over the summer to discuss how to move ahead. Shockingly enough, that meeting never happened.

In 2005, the Prime Minister campaigned on fully preserving old age security, the guaranteed income supplement, and the Canada pension plan. I think we can all admit that the current situation is a far cry from the campaign promise in 2005.

Why should Canadians trust the Conservatives with their retirement savings, when we know that we really cannot trust them on anything else?

We know that by 2030, Conservative cuts to old age security would slash \$11 billion in retirement income from seniors by raising the retirement age from 65 to 67.

I will end there and will leave the rest for questions and comments.

Business of Supply

•(1610)

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Minister of State (Western Economic Diversification), CPC): Mr. Speaker, these are just very practical questions that I would like to ask my colleague to answer in terms of evaluating this, in terms of a business proposal.

Is this proposal made assuming a balanced budget? What would the average increases on premiums be for the average worker? What assumptions were made regarding workforce size and mortality expectations of the recipient base, and over what time period? What would the dollar value be in terms of cost to employers? How would this impact long-term sustainability of the CPP?

What other actuarial assumptions were used to calculate the cost of their proposal? How do they compare to assumptions used in our current CPP model, as well, framing that in terms of CPP sustainability over a 25-year period?

•(1615)

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for that list of, I do not know how many, questions she had that required specific stats and figures that we cannot sit here and share in the five minutes that I have for multiple questions.

I am happy to sit down with the Minister of State for Western Economic Diversification to go through the analytics that we did to arrive at the need for increasing the CPP. Of course we looked at responsible measures. That is exactly what the NDP does day in and day out. We are ensuring that we are being fiscally responsible and socially responsible to Canadians, ensuring that our seniors have no fear. We do not want our seniors to fear that they are going to retire into poverty. We want to make sure that our seniors are retiring with dignity, and that needs to be done in a fiscally and socially responsible manner.

That is exactly what the NDP is doing. I am happy to sit down with the minister and go through the details of how to achieve that.

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a question based on two comments by the member for Toronto—Danforth earlier today, both of which were wrong.

First, he said that my colleague, the member for Kings—Hants, said he was opposed to any increase in the size of the CPP. In fact he told me that he was in favour of a gradual increase, which is the same as what I said and the same as what the Liberal platform said in 2011.

Second, he said that the NDP plan was not to double the CPP, at which point I said, “Okay, then we are not so far apart.” However, I subsequently learned that the NDP platform of 2011 said the following:

We will work with the provinces to bring about increases to your Canada/Quebec Pension Plan benefit, with the eventual goal to double the benefits you receive....

There we have it, right in the NDP platform, saying that the eventual goal is to double the benefits people receive. They do not mention premiums, but presumably those would double too.

Why did the hon. member say that it was not the plan to double the CPP when the NDP's own platform says that is the plan?

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Mr. Speaker, I cannot put words in other people's mouths. What I can do is speak the facts and what history has shown.

What history has shown us is that the Liberals had a very poor record on pensions while they were in government. The CPP cuts made by the previous Liberal administration had a devastating impact. We know that by 2030, the impact of the Liberal CPP cuts will reach a staggering \$15 billion a year.

Instead of supporting the NDP plan to significantly increase CPP, the Liberals have called for a voluntary supplemental CPP.

I am not ashamed to say that we will be working responsibly, we will be working with labour and banks and Canadians in general. We will be looking at multiple avenues forward to be able to increase the benefit in CPP that our seniors are receiving.

If we can reach a point where we are able to double that for our seniors, then I am happy we can do that for our seniors. Our seniors deserve better, and Canadians deserve better. What the Conservatives have offered us and what the Liberals have proven they are not able to offer us is clearly not enough for Canadians.

Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I feel I must rise to quickly address in good faith the points made by my colleague from Markham—Unionville. The first point is that I was working straight from *Hansard* on the statement by the Liberal finance critic, which says:

We don't agree with a mandatory CPP increase at this time because of what still remains stubbornly high unemployment....

If that quotation is wrong compared to what he said even more recently, then I withdraw it.

The second point is that the quotation from the platform talks about an eventual goal, and our concern was that the hon. member was making it look like the motion was talking about doubling now, not just phasing in.

Those are the two points I wanted to make in response. I think maybe the general point my hon. friend made in response to my question, that we may not be so far apart, is something we could work on. I am beginning to learn from the interventions from our colleagues across the way that there may be at least some room for discussion in the sense that at least one member has backed off and said, “Of course, we are not against raising the CPP, just not now”.

Let us all talk in our speeches about the question of whether we can afford to start now, and why the need is such that we need to start now.

The motion, just so no one is under any misapprehension, says:

That the House call on the government to commit to supporting an immediate phase-in of increases to basic public pension benefits under the Canada and Quebec Pension Plans at the upcoming meeting of federal, provincial and territorial finance ministers.

That meeting is this month at Meech Lake.

Business of Supply

It is key to put this in the context of a package that the NDP has been proposing: first, gradually phasing in an increase in CPP/QPP benefits, by way of initiating; second, increasing the GIS to lift low-income seniors out of poverty; third, returning to the age of eligibility of 65 from the government's plan to take it to 67; and fourth, tightening up legislation to protect workers' pensions, for the few workers in our economy who now have pensions, when a company is facing bankruptcy, leaving the country, being sold or undergoing corporate restructuring.

It is in that context that we are talking about the need for a gradual phase-in of an increase. It is also important to know that the provinces and the territories see this as a pressing matter. It is not coming out of the blue. This is, at some level, about collaborative federalism.

A year ago, in December of 2012, the Minister of Finance said he was prepared to move forward, but now we have the government denying that. The provincial, territorial and federal finance ministers will meet next week with the beginnings of a plan already on the table from the provincial and territorial governments that this government now seems intent on sidestepping. That is really the question. Will the government be working with the provinces and the territories to get a start on what we are calling a phase-in?

It is not just the provinces. For example, those who do seem to know their economics, the CEO of CIBC, the former chief actuary of the CPP, have indicated that this is not only a good idea, but fully feasible. *The Globe and Mail* editorial yesterday talked about expanding the CPP:

It should be done, and it should be done soon.... It sounds like a tax increase. It's not. It's a savings plan. And it's the best one we've got.

I am not saying that every time *The Globe and Mail* writes an editorial, it is right but it happens to be right on this one.

Mr. Andrew Cash: When they agree with us.

Mr. Craig Scott: Yes, when they agree with us.

Let me do my colleagues across the way the honour of dealing with two critical attacks being made by the Conservative government on this position: first, the idea that this is somehow a new payroll tax; and second, that this is a risky plan that would kill jobs.

First is the claim that this is a new payroll tax. The truth is, as the Canada Research Chair on Public Finance at Simon Fraser University, Professor Jon Kesselman, has told us, and keep in mind he is one of the country's experts on payroll taxes, this is a misrepresentation. He says that the CPP is a savings plan not a payroll tax on employers, even.

● (1620)

It is a retirement investment plan jointly funded by employee and employer. We cannot forget the broad purpose, that it not only increases the retirement security of individuals but also the collective economic security of the entire society. This is key.

The second critique or attack is that this is a risky plan that would kill jobs and we have been hearing more about this in the last two days from the Minister of State for Finance. I worry that this is very misleading to Canadians from the government. Experts have been

clear that previous increases to CPP contributions did not hinder the economy and did not cause job loss.

What we are getting from the government is a wild figure being cited about job losses by the Minister of State for Finance and no evidence to support it, even when asked to substantiate it here in the House. I do look forward to hearing whether or not there is something to back up that claim.

Let me return to the question of economics. We also have CIBC economist, Benjamin Tal, telling us that the CPP is important because it would boost savings:

The CPP is a good one.... The CPP has the scale to make big investments and get better returns with relatively low cost.

That sums up in so many ways the benefits of going the CPP route, including through a mandatory approach, by increasing premiums gradually to sufficient levels. It is very important to contrast that to the plan that the government has been wanting to push, implementing the pooled registered pension plans, which are not much more than glossier versions of the RRSPs that we have now. They are subject to often very high administrative and service fees charged by banks and other institutions.

The difference between the cost-effectiveness of the CPP and RRSPs is quite astounding. I think even recent figures coming down suggest that the performance of the CPP over the last measurable cycle was well in excess of the RRSPs that Canadians are encouraged to put their money in privately.

Let me now turn to the question of need that I mentioned at the outset. We are living in an era of increasingly precarious work. Here I salute my colleague from Davenport who has been putting this at the forefront of a lot of his work in Toronto.

The fact is that more and more the work world is one where almost nothing can be counted on and this includes fewer workplace pensions. Indeed, 11 million Canadians are without any workplace pension. At the rate we are going, 60% of current youth will retire with a drop, and for many of them a significant drop, in their standard of living.

The precariousness of financial security at retirement also comes from life circumstances that mean some people have different periods in the workforce, which so often have nothing to do or anything to do with their own fault or with lack of merit. It is just the way things have turned out.

I had a note from a couple in my riding, Bill and Jean. They included this in a letter that was about something else because they felt this was so important. They said we need to increase the financial security of retirees and that CPP should look after retirees since we do see seniors not having enough CPP eligibility while they are in the workforce. Therefore, CPP should boost coverage somewhat.

Business of Supply

It is important to note that the whole question of period of time and lateness into the workforce is something especially experienced by women in our society. I will not go into detail because everyone here understands that. It is made even worse by something that was brought to my attention by a constituent at my recent holiday party. We spoke for a good 5 to 10 minutes on this. She talked to me about ageism in the work world and how, increasingly, it is difficult to find jobs when people lose their jobs in their late forties or early fifties. That has knock-on effects for their ability to collect CPP.

It is true that the reality of the needs that are pushing us and other commentators to the gradual phase-in of increasing CPP has to lie at the bottom of this. We have to understand what the average citizen is experiencing, the stress in their lives and work lives. They know the challenges they are facing and that they need some kind of help from the Parliament of Canada.

• (1625)

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Minister of State (Western Economic Diversification), CPC): Mr. Speaker, certainly in the spirit that we have had in this place with regard to debate and validity of debate, I respect my colleague making the comment on the front end of his speech when he said we really should be having a debate about whether we should increase CPP premiums now. In the spirit of that statement, I have some questions that I would love for him to address.

What is the size of premium increase that he would anticipate in terms of being necessary to support this proposal? What would the size of the workforce need to be to support this proposal down the road in terms of sustainability? What assumptions were made to assert the NDP's claim that this would not have an impact on job sustainability? When the cost of a premium like this is increased to employers, that is obviously going to be a factor in their cash flow analysis and long-term business planning.

I would love to hear some details, some actual economic model information, on why this is a good proposal. Convince us that increasing CPP premiums right now is something that is sustainable in the long term and is not going to hurt job creation. All I have heard today is this is bad, that is good. If we are really talking about increasing the standard of debate in this place, we should be talking about these things.

I would love to hear some actual economic facts with regard to the NDP's proposal.

• (1630)

Mr. Craig Scott: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question and I hope my hon. friend will also appreciate that exact detailed answers are not at my fingertips.

What I would say is that it is very important to note that the motion is, indeed, about a gradual phase in. It is also a political question. It has to do with the fact that the provinces and territories are ready and that they themselves have some kind of framework they want the finance minister to take seriously when they meet next week. Frankly, because of the whole question of how federalism works and my own sense that they surely have done the analysis, I would be very partial to at least starting with what they want to start with.

I would push back a little and say that we are hearing this quite exceptional figure of 70,000 jobs that are going to be lost because of something the government does not have enough information on. We are only talking about a gradual phase in without specific numbers, so how the government knows or thinks it knows that 70,000 jobs are going to be lost is, frankly, beyond me and I would love to see the numbers on that from the other side.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to pursue this whole issue of trying to get a bit more clarity. I appreciate the motion that the NDP has brought forward. There is some confusion and if he could provide some clarity, it would be greatly appreciated.

There was a time when the NDP's position was to double up on CPP. I listened to that member in particular and the member from Vancouver who said, in essence, in 5 years, 10 years, 15 years, maybe it might happen type of thing. Could the member for Toronto—Danforth clearly indicate that there has been a change in shift in policy, that it is no longer the NDP's position that it should be doubled and that, in fact, it favours a more gradual increase in the years ahead? That seems to be what the New Democrats are saying.

Mr. Craig Scott: Mr. Speaker, the two items that he presented as alternatives are quite consistent. The idea of the phase in and the idea of, as we put it in our platform, the eventual goal of doubling are perfectly consistent. We are not saying when an eventual goal of doubling should or could be reached and this is where some of the critique across the way has to be taken into account. Exactly what are the impacts as we phase in? What kind of information do we have about when we could actually even hope to get to that eventual goal? I honestly do not see a huge contradiction or any contradiction at all and I would simply leave it at that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): 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 La Pointe-de-l'Île, Ethics; the hon. member for York South—Weston, Health; the hon. member for Montcalm, Persons with Disabilities.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Calgary Northeast.

Mr. Devinder Shory (Calgary Northeast, CPC): Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I would like to express heartfelt condolences from the Shory family and from the constituents of Calgary Northeast to the family and friends of Nelson Mandela and the nation of South Africa. Mandela's long walk to freedom left a lasting legacy for his people, leading to them to peace, not retribution.

Mandela once said:

When a man has done what he considers to be his duty to his people and his country, he can rest in peace.

Indeed, he can rest in peace now.

Today, I appreciate the opportunity to respond to the hon. member's motion for debate on expanding the Canada pension plan. Let me be clear. Our Conservative government is focused on what matters to Canadians: growing the economy and helping to create jobs.

Business of Supply

Since 2006, we have taken responsible actions to ensure that Canada's economy is well positioned for long-term prosperity. We are on the right track. Thanks to the economic action plan, we have created over one million net new jobs since the end of the recession, nearly 90% of which are full-time positions and more than 80% are in the private sector. This is the best job creation record in the G7 by far. What is more, Statistics Canada recently announced that 21,600 net new jobs were added in November, with the unemployment rate remaining at 6.9%. This is a record of which my constituents of Calgary Northeast and all Canadians can be proud.

However, we know that Canada is not immune to the challenges beyond its borders. The global economy remains fragile, especially in the U.S. and Europe, both among our largest trading partners. Indeed, the sovereign debt crisis in Europe continues to weigh on the confidence of consumers and businesses. Closer to home, a slow recovery in the U.S., as well as uncertainty surrounding the sustainability of its finances, poses the greatest risk to the Canadian economy.

In light of these factors, not surprisingly, the International Monetary Fund recently revised its outlook downward for the real GDP growth in both advanced and emerging economies. In fact, the IMF now projects that growth in advanced economies will average just 1.2% in 2013, down from its previous projection of 1.4%.

With significant risks still remaining in the global economy, Canada must remain well positioned to withstand any shocks arising from beyond its borders. However, for some reason, it is in this challenging economic environment that the NDP unilaterally demands that we expand the Canada pension plan.

While CPP reforms continue to be examined by ourselves and the provinces, we share the concerns of small businesses and their workers of increasing costs in a fragile global recovery. I would like to offer the House some examples of what people think about expanding the CPP at this time.

First, here is what the Canadian Federation of Independent Business had to say:

Small firms believe that the economy cannot manage a significant increase in payroll taxes...Thousands of workers could find themselves with reduced hours or out of a job as a result of employers having to react to higher payroll costs

Similarly, the Canadian Restaurant and Foodservices Association had the following concern:

The restaurant industry is one of the country's largest employers and the number one place where Canadians get their first-job experience. Increasing CPP premiums puts these opportunities at risk.

There is still more. Writing for *Canadian Business* magazine, here is what Larry MacDonald had to say:

There doesn't seem to be a real need for it...A jump in CPP premiums makes it more expensive for businesses to maintain a workforce and could lead to job losses.

I could go on and on. There is just so much opposition to this short-sighted NDP proposal to potentially double the CPP.

•(1635)

Why does the NDP want to increase payroll taxes on small businesses? Does the NDP not recognize the vital role that small businesses play in Canada's economy? Does the NDP not recognize that they are essential in creating jobs and economic growth?

Fortunately, our Conservative government understands that small businesses are the cornerstone of Canada's economy. Indeed, that is why since 2006 our government has lowered the small business tax bill by over \$28,000. We have achieved this through such measures as reducing the small business tax rate from 12% to 11%, increasing the amount of income eligible to lower the small business tax rate from \$300,000 to \$500,000 and introducing the job-creating small business hiring tax credit. It is measures like these that have left Canada's entrepreneurs with more money to grow their businesses and create more jobs.

Indeed, we are taking further action to support Canada's job creators.

Through economic action plan 2013, we are extending and expanding the hiring credit for small businesses, which will benefit an estimated 560,000 employers and provide close to \$225 million in tax relief in 2013. We are also freezing employment insurance premiums to provide predictability and stability for small businesses. This action will keep \$660 million in the pockets of job creators in 2014 alone to be spent on hiring more employees, improving wages and growing their businesses. This is how a responsible government supports job creation. Unlike the opposition, we will not attack job creators with massive tax hikes.

Unfortunately, while we are supporting this vital sector of our economy, the NDP is putting forward proposals that will hurt small businesses. As if a \$20 billion carbon tax was not enough, now the NDP is demanding that our government double the CPP, which is a proposal that would kill up to 70,000 Canadian jobs. Once more, the NDP plan would force contributions raised on average by over \$1,600 per year. A family with two workers could be forced to pay as much as \$2,600 every year. Where does the NDP want the family to find this money? I know that it does not grow on trees. Families may be forced to cut on rent payments, heating or grocery bills.

The NDP is out of touch with the concerns of Canadian families and it has not listened to the concerns of the provinces either.

The NDP claims that a CPP expansion has the support of the provinces. As hon. members should be aware, any expansion of the Canada pension plan would require the support of two-thirds of provinces representing two-thirds of the Canadian population. Had the member done his research, he would have learned that a number of provinces have clearly expressed concerns about the economic impact of higher payroll deductions on workers and their employers at a time when the global economy remains uncertain.

Saskatchewan Premier Brad Wall has already said that now is not the time for contribution changes or increases.

Business of Supply

Nova Scotia Premier Stephen McNeil has said, “some issues about what that will mean to small business owners in this province, and what is the impact on low-income Nova Scotians and Canadians”.

New Brunswick Finance Minister Blaine Higgs stated, “We don't think it's the right time to put on additional costs to business owners and employees”.

Talking for British Columbia, the finance department has said, “B. C. believes pension reforms should not be undertaken before the economy has recovered from the impacts of the recent recession”.

We share these concerns. Why do we share these basic concerns? Because the basic truth that the opposition does not understand is that for many Canadians there is no good retirement plan if they have no job.

That is not to say that the opposition motion is completely without merit. It is actually quite useful in offering us a prime example of how not to go about improving retirement security for Canadians.

• (1640)

The NDP wants to derail our economic recovery, and it wants to raise payroll taxes. It could not care less about the concerns raised by the provinces and small businesses.

In addition, it ignores the fact that Canada's retirement system is already recognized as among the strongest in the world, thanks in large portion to the action plan taken by this Conservative government. Indeed, this is a record of which we are justifiably proud.

Our Conservative government has delivered positive results and offered innovative new options to Canadians working and planning for retirement as well as those who are already in retirement. Our actions have resulted in a very low rate of poverty among seniors.

I would like to take some time to highlight the three pillars of Canada's retirement income system and show the opposition how this system is helping Canadian seniors.

The first pillar, comprising old age security and the guaranteed income supplement program, provide a basic minimum income for seniors, which is funded out of the federal government's revenues. Indeed, the old age security and the guaranteed income supplement are important toward reducing poverty and ensuring basic income support in retirement. That is why our government implemented a new guaranteed income supplement top-up benefit for Canada's most vulnerable seniors. As a result of our changes, more than 680,000 low-income seniors are now receiving additional annual benefits of up to \$620 for a single senior and \$865 for couples.

Currently the federal government provides approximately \$40 billion in OAS/GIS benefits per year to more than 5.2 million Canadians. Given the sheer size of this program and its importance to our retirement system, we recently took steps to ensure that OAS remains on a sustainable path over the long term. We did so because the OAS program was designed for a different time. In the 1970s, there were seven workers for every one person over the age 65; in 20 years, there will be only two. In 1970, life expectancy was age 69 for men and 76 for women; today, it is 79 for men and 83 for women. At the same time, Canada's birth rate is falling.

Canadians are living longer and healthier lives, which, of course, is a good thing. Our changes would ensure OAS is put on a sustainable path so it is there when the next generation of Canadians need it. That is responsible economic leadership.

The Canada pension plan is the second pillar in Canada's retirement income system. It is one where we have already made improvements. Working with the provinces, we modernized the Canada pension plan to make it more flexible for those transitioning out of the workforce, to better reflect the way Canadians currently live, work and retire.

The CPP and Quebec pension plan currently provide approximately \$45 billion per year in benefits to about 6.6 million individuals, financed by contributions from workers and employers. I am happy to inform this House that the most recent actuarial report on the CPP by the Chief Actuary, tabled in Parliament on December 3, confirmed that the plan is sustainable at the current contribution rate of 9.9% of pensionable earnings for at least the next 75 years. In other words, the CPP is in good shape and has a great future.

I would like to turn now to the third and final pillar of Canada's retirement income system. The government has provided various tax-assisted private savings opportunities to help Canadians save for their retirement. These include registered pension plans and registered retirement savings plans.

Contributions to RPPs and RRSPs are deductible from income for tax purposes, and investment income earned in these plans is not subject to income tax. The federal tax cost associated with RPP and RRSP savings is significant and currently estimated at approximately \$24 billion per year.

Given their importance, we have enhanced the incentives for private savings in a number of ways. In 2009, for example, we consulted Canadians from coast to coast to coast and introduced a number of changes to the framework for federally regulated registered pension plans.

• (1645)

These improvements require the plan sponsors to fund any deficiency that exists at the date the pension plan is terminated. They also provide sponsors of the defined benefit pension plans with more funding flexibility, making them less sensitive to market volatility.

In budget 2008, our government introduced the tax-free savings account, which became available in 2009. The TFSAs are flexible, general purpose, tax-assisted savings accounts that may be used for any purpose, including retirement savings. The TFSA provides greater savings incentives for low and modest income individuals, since neither TFSA investment income nor withdrawals affect eligibility for federal income tested benefits and credits, such as OAS and GIS benefits.

Business of Supply

Initially allowing Canadians to save tax free on up to \$5,000 each year, our government recently increased the amount by \$500. As a result of this action, since 2013 Canadians have been able to benefit from an overall annual tax-free savings contribution limit of \$5,500 from TFSAs.

That is not all. Our government has also taken concrete actions to help address what has been identified as a gap on the voluntary side of Canada's retirement income system. While participation in retirement savings vehicles like RPPs and RRSPs is reasonably high for middle and high income earners, some Canadians may not be taking full advantage of these personal retirement savings opportunities. In particular, research has shown that some modest and middle income households may not be saving enough for retirement.

Indeed, more than an estimated 60% of Canadians do not have access to a workplace pension plan. Our government does not believe this is right. This is precisely why we have introduced pooled registered pension plans, or PRPPs. PRPPs will significantly help small and medium-sized businesses and their employees, who until now have not had access to a large-scale, low-cost private pension option. PRPPs will be low cost. By pooling pension savings, the cost of administering these pension funds will be spread over a larger group of people. As a result, plan members will benefit from lower investment management costs.

I would like to remind my NDP friends that unlike CPP expansion, there was federal, provincial and territorial consensus to proceed with PRPPs. Despite this consensus, the NDP felt they did not want to work toward strengthening Canada's retirement income system and they voted against our government's legislation. This legislation ultimately established the federal framework for PRPPs.

In conclusion, our government will continue to work cooperatively with the provinces to explore potential reforms to CPP. That being said, we will not support any course of action that endangers Canadian jobs, including the NDP's risky and ill-advised proposal to double the CPP contributions. We know that the best retirement plan for tomorrow is a job today. The NDP may claim that that it is serious about job creation and economic growth, but it continues to push forward radical policies that Canadians cannot afford.

Indeed, when it comes managing the economy, Canadians can rest assured that our Conservative government will support initiatives that stimulate job creation and economic growth, not measures that will kill jobs and hurt our economy.

Unfortunately, today's motion from the hon. member for Victoria shows that the same cannot be said for the NDP.

● (1650)

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member says in his remarks that the NDP "unilaterally" seeks an increase in the CPP, ignoring, I suppose, the majority opinion polls that suggest Canadians are onside, and the Canadian Association of Retired Persons, the Canadian Labour Congress and most economists. If it is unilateral, it is a pretty big unilateral.

The member seemed to suggest that the motion is about the radical idea of doubling the CPP contributions. I would invite the hon. member to read the motion. It does no such thing. It is about the upcoming Meech Lake meetings, where we are urging the Minister of Finance to do what the Minister of Finance himself said should be done, which is to move forward with increases in the CPP.

What is the member's position on mandatory versus voluntary agreement? Does he agree with the Minister of Finance that we need to do this in a mandatory way?

Mr. Devinder Shory: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from the other side. I was in the House this morning when he made his opening speech. Let me quote what he said this morning.

He stated, "How can people be expected to voluntarily save when Canadians already have the highest household debt rate in history? To suggest people should voluntarily save, and that will do the trick, ignores the reality that most working people and an increasingly large number of middle-class Canadians as well are not able to save. [...] why take a chance on a voluntary program?"

I welcomed these words from the hon. member for Victoria, whose motion we are discussing today. I think it cuts to the core of what we are really talking about.

The NDP is suggesting to increase the CPP contributions on the very people it admits cannot afford these increases. The NDP would have middle and lower income Canadians choose between rent, groceries and heat for their children, in order to satisfy its own social agenda.

● (1655)

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by congratulating the NDP and my colleagues for having the foresight to put a motion forward to talk about something as important as the pension systems in Canada. We have to find different ways of helping Canadians. People need jobs. Another investment is making sure that we have a viable economy is to ensure that jobs are being produced. At the same time, we have to encourage Canadians to contribute where there are positive vehicles to do that.

The CPP plan was introduced by a previous Liberal government. It has been amazingly successful. I often ask people who hollered and screamed that they did not want the CPP when it came out as to what they would do without it today.

The issue we are now discussing is about finding ways of enhancing and expanding the CPP as an avenue to help people recognize that they need to contribute. This is a great vehicle to do that. The New Democrats are not suggesting how much; the motion talks about how we could better invest and how we would move forward.

How can the hon. member on the other side possibly disagree on having a conversation about helping Canadians retire with a good quality of life and sufficient money?

Mr. Devinder Shory: Mr. Speaker, in 2012, the most recent review of the CPP confirmed that it is sustainable at the current contribution rate of 9.9% of pensionable income for at least 75 years.

Business of Supply

Expanding the CPP is not supported by everyone. In a recent study by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, 65% of businesses said they would freeze or cut salaries; 48% said they would reduce investments in their businesses; and 42% said they would decrease the number of their employees.

Even Liberal Premier Wynne admits there are different perspectives on whether Canadians and businesses can afford to increase their contributions to the CPP in a fragile economy.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is important to note that public pensions are provincial areas of jurisdiction. We used the federal spending power in the mid-1960s to convince the provinces to come on board with a single national plan. We were successful in convincing nine out of the ten provinces to do so. Quebec chose to establish its own Quebec pension plan. As a result, there is a federal-provincial agreement in place to effect any changes to the pension plan. The agreement said that as a government we need to secure the support of two-thirds of the provinces in this country that have at least two-thirds of the Canadian population.

In recent media reports, some provinces, such as Quebec, Saskatchewan and Alberta, have indicated some concern about increasing the benefit levels.

Can my colleague from Calgary tell the House what challenges there would be to achieving a substantial agreement in order to effect these increases in benefit levels and premiums?

Mr. Devinder Shory: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for an intelligent question. I agree with him that some of the provinces have shown their concerns. For the record, let me quote what Nova Scotia Premier Stephen McNeil said:

We have some issues about what that will mean to small business owners in this province, and what is the impact on low-income Nova Scotians and Canadians.

Talking about the quotes, I have consulted some small business owners in my own riding in Calgary Northeast. Romi Sidhu has nine employees. He owns an insurance agency. He said that an increase in the CPP employer contribution would mean that he would need to reconsider the expansion plans that he has for his insurance agency.

On top of that, another employer, Bobby Kular from Kular Enterprises Ltd., said he has seven employees and he agrees with Romi Sidhu.

• (1700)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, as this is the first time I have been able to take the floor in today's opposition day motion, I want to begin by thanking the hon. member for Victoria—my neighbouring riding—a neighbour and an old friend, for an excellent opportunity.

I fully support his motion. It is critical we address CPP. It is the most reliable. It is the very best way in which we can protect and think ahead to the pension benefits that Canadians will need.

I want to ask the member opposite, the member for Calgary Northeast, this question. I think it is quite telling that in today's *Globe and Mail*, the editorial says that the current administration has made a terrible error in rejecting calls to open up discussions for increasing CPP. This is the same newspaper whose editorial policy endorsed the Conservative leader in the last election. This is the

newspaper that in editorial stance represents, may I say quite generally, a pro-business, fiscally responsible approach. There are very many voices across the country calling for an increase in CPP. The question is whether the Conservatives will listen.

Mr. Devinder Shory: Mr. Speaker, I would remind the member that in 2012, the most recent review of the CPP confirmed that it is sustainable at the current contribution rate of 9.9% and it is sustainable for at least 75 years.

The member opposite is well aware that the global economic environment remains fragile. She also knows that global growth has been weaker than expected, with growth in advanced economies stabilizing at a relatively slow pace, while growth in emerging markets has slowed. In light of so many factors, it is not surprising that the International Monetary Fund recently revised downward its outlook for real GDP growth in both advanced and emerging economies.

Coming back to my consultations with my constituents, this is what Daljit Randhawa, from Best Buy Furniture, had to say:

Currently, we have 16 employees, so an increase of \$1,130 per employee would mean an additional \$17,600 in payroll costs for our business.

I will share this also. In my own law firm, the first thing my partner does is ask my wife, Neetu Shory, to look into how much it would actually cost to hire another employee in our law firm. That is the basis for new employees.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to participate in the debate today. I will be sharing my time with the member for Gatineau.

I would like to thank my NDP colleague from Victoria for submitting this motion and his tremendous work on the issue of pensions, which affect so many Canadians. For the benefit of those participating in the debate and for Canadians watching the debate, I will read the motion so that it is clear what we are discussing.

The motion reads as follows:

That the House call on the government to commit to supporting an immediate phase-in of increases to basic public pension benefits under the Canada and Quebec Pension Plans at the upcoming meeting of federal, provincial and territorial finance ministers.

The meeting is to take place this month at Meech Lake.

The motion does not specify exactly what form these increases would take or the rate of increase, but it does say that the ministers should take the opportunity to address this issue without delay at the meeting at Meech Lake.

That is because, as many are now recognizing, Canada is facing a retirement security crisis. Nearly a third of Canadians face a drop of more than 20% in their standard of living by the time they face retirement. I see this frequently in my riding of Parkdale—High Park. Constituents come to my office and say they had no idea how financially strapped they would be when they retired.

They kind of expected there would be enough through the Canada and Quebec pension plans to support them in their retirement years, and let us be very clear that the Canada and Quebec funds are absolutely rock-solid and that this program is the most solid pension base that Canadians could ever want. It is indexed to inflation and it is portable no matter where a person worked. No matter where one goes in the country, people have access to the same benefits. It is a rock-solid investment that Canadians can be confident in for many decades to come. The major problem is that the benefits that it currently pays out are not sufficient to guarantee retirement security for Canadians.

The reason so many Canadians are facing a steep decline in their retirement income is that the vast majority of Canadians do not have a private pension plan, a company pension plan, an employer pension plan, or RRSPs. Canadians who had RRSPs and who became unemployed would often have to take the money out of their RRSPs, and they did not have other investments. The reality is that most Canadians rely on the Canada and Quebec pension plans, but the problem is that it does not replace enough of people's pre-retirement income. That is why so many agree that there is a retirement security crisis looming in this country.

Last year the finance minister agreed with this assessment, and he agreed to move forward to increase CPP and QPP benefits. However, now he does not seem to even want to meet with the provincial finance ministers. He has been ducking and diving on this issue, so New Democrats want to encourage him to address it.

We know that our colleagues in the Liberal Party have proposed a voluntary plan; we believe that what Canadians need is a mandatory plan that will guarantee their retirement income, and that is what we are proposing.

What we are proposing is completely affordable. Let me share with my colleagues some costing that my colleague from Victoria has done.

There are a variety of ways to increase the CPP. One is the plan proposed by the Canadian Labour Congress, which would lead to a doubling of benefits. That would cost about \$4 a week, the cost of a couple of cups of coffee a week. That would be the cost to double the retirement benefits for Canadians.

● (1705)

However, there are other proposals that are out there. P.E.I. has a proposal that would cost less than \$2 a week. What would that mean for Canadians? It would provide additional pension benefits for Canadians of \$3,000 each year. That sounds like a pretty darn good deal. I do not think there is any investment that Canadians could find that would give them that kind of return with the security and surety of the Canada pension plan.

It is not just New Democrats who are saying this makes sense. As we have heard, there was an editorial today in *The Globe and Mail*, not exactly a radical leftist newspaper, I am told. Let me quote from it. With regard to expanding CPP, it says:

It should be done, and it should be done soon. Conservatives of the large and small-c variety have long been uncomfortable with a bigger national pension plan. It sounds like a tax increase. It's not. It's a savings plan. And it's the best one we've got.

I wholeheartedly agree.

Business of Supply

Let us look at some others. We have an expert on payroll taxes, Rhys Kesselman, the Canada Research Chair on Public Finance at the School of Public Policy at Simon Fraser University. Here is what he has to say:

Since the proposed CPP premium hikes would provide workers correspondingly higher benefits in retirement, they are not like an ordinary payroll tax increase. Rather, they are like an individual's payment for improved insurance coverage.

That is what it is, retirement insurance.

He went on to say:

This premium-benefit linkage means that CPP premiums lack the disincentive effects of most taxes.

In other words, it is not a negative but a positive.

He also said:

Concern over the effects of CPP premium hikes is unwarranted and should not be allowed to block this important policy reform any longer.

We wholeheartedly agree.

Let us hear what the OECD pension team has to say about Canada's pension plan. Edward Whitehouse, leader of the OECD pension team, said:

The analysis suggests that Canada does not face major challenges of financial sustainability with its public pension schemes. ... Long-term projections show that a public retirement-income provision is financially sustainable.

That is what we said earlier: our public pension plan is sound.

He went on to say:

Population ageing will naturally increase public pension spending, but the rate of growth is lower and the starting point better than many OECD countries. Moreover, the earnings-related public schemes (CPP/QPP) have built up substantial reserves to meet these future liabilities.

He is convinced that we have the capacity with our current plan.

Another *Globe and Mail* article also said:

On the other hand, Canada is different because, unlike most other countries, our public pension commitments are not a substantial threat to our public finances. The Canada Pension Plan is in long-run balance. Old Age Security takes only 2.41 per cent of GDP. Very few OECD countries have lower levels of public pension spending as a share of GDP than Canada.

To take the extreme example, Italy spends more than 14% of GDP on public pensions, up 10% from only a few years ago; we are at 2.41% of GDP.

We have the support for this initiative. As I said, *The Globe and Mail*, tax experts, and the Canadian Association of Retired Persons just want us to get on with this. Even the CIBC economics report said that the CPP is a good plan, saying, "The CPP has the scale to make big investments and get better returns with relatively low cost."

Canadians rely on the Canada and Quebec pension plans. We have to make them better and stronger so that they cover more of people's post-retirement income. We can do it.

Let us get together in the House and address this crisis now. Let us make it happen.

Business of Supply

•(1710)

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I represent a constituency, Ottawa West—Nepean, which has one of the fifth or sixth highest percentages of seniors. There is a good number of elderly women, many of whom do not have a defined benefit pension and rely on the public system. This is an issue that I follow very closely.

We could say that there is a certain attractiveness to expanding the Canada pension plan, but I say to the member opposite that it always comes down to how we are going to pay for it. Can Canadian employers afford to take on a not insignificant increase in payroll taxes? We know from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business that payroll taxes are the toughest on employers and on creating new jobs for small businesses and medium-sized enterprises in particular.

What do we say to the average Canadian worker, someone who is middle class and maybe making \$35,000 or \$40,000 a year, struggling to make ends meet? Their hydro bills are going up, particularly in Ontario. They are facing a tough go. Not all Canadians or Ontarians have the money to pay these increased payroll taxes, which they would be required to pay. It is not an issue of whether it is a payroll tax or a contribution, they do not have any cash in their pockets to put out. This is the case for many of the people that I represent.

While the idea has certain attractive elements to it, does the member not concede that there are far too many Canadians who simply do not have the money to be able to make increased contributions because they are having a tough time making ends meet today?

•(1715)

Ms. Peggy Nash: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague opposite for his thoughtful question, but I ask him to consider the proposition of paying the cost of a cup of coffee and getting an extra \$3,000 a year in pension benefit increases. That sounds like a pretty darn good deal for just the cost of a cup of coffee, for \$2. The solution to someone who is cash-strapped today is not to have them fall into even greater poverty tomorrow.

For my friends in small businesses, I come from a riding that is full of remarkable small businesses. I know how tough it is for those small businesses, which are getting gouged by credit card fees in their stores. They operate close to the wire, but I say to them that the best thing for small businesses is retirees with cash in their pockets.

Is that not what small businesses want? They want customers with money.

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would just like to clarify one point. I think the hon. member referred to us as, in some sense, substituting the voluntary CPP for the real one. I would remind her that it was the Liberal government, under Lester Pearson, that brought in the CPP in the first place. It was Paul Martin who fixed it and made it sustainable. We are more committed than, or at least as committed as, any other party to the long-run sustainability of the existing Canada pension plan and we are open to moderate increases in the size of it over time.

Regarding the supplemental Canada pension plan, we want to consider that as an addition, not as an alternative. I made reference to the British experience, where because they have auto-enrolment, even though it is voluntary, over 90% of employees decide to stay in it. It is voluntary, but 90% of the people elect to stay in it.

I would ask if the hon. member understands the long-term commitment of the Liberal Party, our definitive commitment to the existing CPP, and the point that our supplemental CPP, while voluntary, is set up in such a way that many people will choose to participate.

Ms. Peggy Nash: Mr. Speaker, I welcome my colleague's support for our motion, if that is what I take his comments to be. That is wonderful news, because they had been advancing a voluntary proposal.

It can muddy the debate when people say that they like a little bit of this and a little bit of that. We have an opportunity now to improve the Canada and Quebec pension plans once and for all. Let us get this on track so that Canadians can have security when they go into retirement, so that we do not have a financial crisis for about a third of Canadians. We do not want to see that.

If the hon. member is saying that he supports the NDP proposal, we are quite happy to accept that support. I then reach across the aisle and ask my colleagues on the government side for their support. I think that would give added confidence and encouragement to the Minister of Finance when he meets the provincial and territorial ministers in Meech Lake later this month.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to rise in this House to take part in the debate on the motion moved by the hon. member for Victoria. The motion invites the House to call on the government to commit to supporting an immediate phase-in of increases to basic public pension benefits under the Canada and Quebec pension plans at the upcoming meeting of federal, provincial and territorial finance ministers.

In my opinion, this is probably one of the most important federal-provincial-territorial conferences. It will be held not far from my home, at Meech Lake, a name that may not sit very well with some people. However, for once, if something positive comes from this meeting, the lake could be known as the home of a major vision.

Go ahead and tell me that I believe in Santa Claus. I hope that members of this House, of all parties, will support this motion. No particular numbers are attached to it, though some of our Conservative colleagues do not like that. They have tried to tie us in financial knots. However, that is not what the motion is asking for. It is about an intent. It is about sitting down with our provincial and territorial counterparts in an attempt to solve a major problem.

I have been here all day for all the debates. I have heard comments to the effect that we in the NDP are out of touch, that we cannot count, that the sky is falling and that the country will go bankrupt.

I would like to get back to the real issue to point out clearly what we are asking for and whom it could help. In other situations, I often say something that applies to this one even more. We are talking about the Canada pension plan and the Québec pension plan, not about private schemes. We are talking about basic schemes that, let us admit it, provide peanuts. It is true that it is expensive to add any amount at all, because a lot of people are involved. However, a lot of people depend on these schemes for their livelihood. I challenge anyone in this House to live on that kind of income for many years.

We must sit down and deal with the crux of the issue: why we are here and why the government exists. A government certainly exists to encourage national prosperity, but it also exists to make sure that everyone can benefit from that and that no one is left behind in any respect.

The time is right to ask ourselves those questions. I am sure I am not alone in going to my riding and being constantly asked, not only to attend activities to meet my constituents, but also to take part in collections of non-perishable food items.

Last Monday, I was at the Buffet des continents. I had actually invited all my colleagues in the House to go. Tony Priftakis and Mélanie Gauthier welcomed people to their restaurant for free in exchange for three cans of food to help the most disadvantaged. We collected a record amount of food to help Moisson Outaouais, a food bank that supplies all the food banks in my region. It is located across the river, close to this great city of Ottawa, the capital of Canada, where we still find some pockets of extreme poverty, which include many of our seniors.

Letting these people live in poverty is a reflection of our society as a whole. I do not mean to sound socialist. I come from a business background. I had a business as a lawyer, working with other lawyers. I love life, but I do not like to see children not eating three times a day or seniors who are too embarrassed and humiliated to go to food banks and ask for food.

Last Monday evening, entire families came, because they were able to find three small cans to exchange for a sumptuous free meal.

• (1720)

For them, that was their Christmas dinner. That was Monday. On Thursday morning, everyone here may have been stopped on a few street corners, because it was the media fundraising drive. On this occasion, all the media in the region get together and raise money for food banks and soup kitchens so that seniors can survive and have a decent holiday season.

I was on a street corner with Sister Denise Blouin. She told me that people needed this help all year long, not just during the holidays. The needs are growing. On Thursday, I will see this firsthand. I will be serving meals with the people at the Saint-François soup kitchen. Every year I do this, it breaks my heart.

As a society, we are failing miserably. We are being questioned over \$2.25 or \$3.25 by the members on the government benches. They are being driven around in limousines, but they are afraid to bring our seniors who need that amount up to a decent standard of living. I find that appalling. Sometimes, I think we forget why we are here.

Business of Supply

The Notre-Dame Market had its Christmas party on Saturday. Once again, there were many seniors there. There was a food drive, and a meal was provided. Everyone was gathered together in one place with the simple hope of having a meal. That is absolutely incredible. When one-third of the population cannot survive on the Canada pension plan, we know that something serious is happening.

People go to the Centre de pédiatrie sociale de Gatineau because they cannot go to a hospital. There is so much suffering. They mayor's breakfast took place on Sunday in Gatineau, and Mayor Maxime Pedneaud-Jobin honoured a 23-year tradition. A reporter asked me if I thought it was important to be there. I said yes, but that I hoped that someday we would not need that kind of event anymore.

I find it appalling that we are celebrating the 23rd year of an event that is designed to collect Christmas hampers for people who do not have enough to eat. Meanwhile, we are talking about economics, which is very important, I agree. However, the motion moved by my colleague calls on us to work with our provincial and territorial counterparts to address a pressing issue. No one is asking that it be fixed by tomorrow morning. The government needs to stop fearmongering and making people think that we will bankrupt the country. That is not the issue.

There needs to be a firm commitment from federal, provincial and territorial partners to make this a viable system so that people no longer live below the poverty line, as is becoming increasingly common.

I would like to bring to the members' attention the fact that poverty among seniors affects mostly women. Many single women who are 65 or older live on a meagre income. Once again, we need to go and speak to these people.

On November 15, we met with representatives of the Federal Superannuates National Association. They talked about their concern that the government is doing all kinds of things to scare them because it is unilaterally making changes to legislation and agreements without consulting them.

Peoples' pensions are not protected when companies that have received all kinds of major subsidies from the government go bankrupt. Who pays the price? The people who worked their entire lives and contributed to those pension plans.

I was very proud when my colleague introduced Bill C-331 to protect them. These kinds of measures will allow people to have a decent life and to keep the economy going, as my colleague for Parkdale—High Park said.

• (1725)

Thus, the Conservatives should not pass really inappropriate measures, although it might not be such a bad thing. Perhaps there would be someone else like Solange Denis, who said in 1986, if I am not mistaken, "Goodbye Charlie Brown."

• (1730)

[*English*]

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for her words. I cannot say kind words.

Business of Supply

I did not drive here in my limousine. I did not drive here disrespecting the poor and the needy in this country.

I have spent my life as a small business owner. I have spent my life being involved in the community in which I live, in many community projects, like the ones she talked about, whether they are food banks or Christmas care, and many of them anonymously. They are not done for pride or pleasure. They are done because one is a member of the community and ones does it.

Many small business owners like me for years have contributed to the Canada pension plan, but not as applicants and not as people who will collect a Canada pension. It is because we are business owners and we have to match what the employees put in. I am sorry, I cannot do the calculations right now. I am sure it is hundreds of thousands of dollars I have contributed to the Canada pension plan, without qualifying for it myself until I took this job, until the people of my neighbourhood, because I was a compassionate business person, elected me to the House of Commons.

What the members are asking is that small business people take money out of their pockets and do it again. It has been said that we could do it with a cup of coffee. Just the other day, the Ontario government said that the price of a cup of coffee a day is how much they are going to raise hydro. The day before that, there was somebody else.

From the guy who sells people the cup of coffee, I cannot afford to go without the cup being sold. If it is not sold by us, I cannot afford the extra cost of the Canada pension plan contributions. That will be the cost in our communities. It will be the small business owner who is no longer able to be involved in these projects, as the member stated.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Françoise Boivin: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's long question. I hope I will have just as much time to answer.

It goes without saying that every time members opposite respond, they try to highlight the most dramatic aspect of the situation. What we are saying here today, and what I am hearing from both sides, is that the need exists. I do not believe that the member wanted to say that the need is not there. He talked about small businesses. I was a small business owner as well, and I completely understand what he was saying. No matter the size of the business, they all contribute.

When we sit down with people and talk to them, it is obvious that they are aware of all this. The future of these people is at stake. People could spend 10, 15 or 20 years below the poverty line, with all that entails. What I have never understood about the Conservatives is that they do not see the consequences of living in poverty. It causes health problems as well as various other kinds of problems, all of which represent significant costs for our society. We should perhaps show a little more compassion about this. For example, during the election campaign, I heard the Conservative candidate answer a question about poverty by saying that they would find jobs for everyone.

This ignores the fact that some people, unfortunately, are not able to work. There are Canadians of a certain age, people aged 58, 60 or 62, who come to see me at my MP office and tell me that they cannot

find a job. These people are depending on us and the work we do in the House.

Being only fair does not require bankrupting the country.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member focused many of her comments on seniors living in poverty.

Winnipeg North is no different from any other constituency in which there are difficult decisions that many of our seniors have to make. One of the saddest stories is when people have to ask whether they need their meds or food on the kitchen table. There are many grandparents who do not even have the money to buy something nice for a grandchild.

The pension issue is a serious issue. I have had the opportunity to bring forward numerous petitions about guaranteeing and enhancing the CPP, OAS, and GIS.

The Liberal Party supports the motion. The Liberal Party has talked about having a CPP supplement that would be open for individuals who would not normally be able to contribute to CPP, such as a spouse who is out of the workforce for many years. To what degree does she see value in a supplementary program?

● (1735)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Françoise Boivin: Mr. Speaker, I would like to emphasize that no one should ever have to choose between medication and housing or between feeding themselves and feeding their children. People should not have to sacrifice to allow their children to eat and go to school. This is absolutely indecent and unacceptable in our society and in a country as rich in natural resources as Canada.

Whatever decisions must be made, we have to stop quibbling about the smallest of details. We have to stop trying to find out who deserves the credit for introducing what. If it is someone else's initiative, it is not good, but if it is ours, it is great. Let us stop trying to find out whether it was us who brought in this and that in 1962 or whether some other party introduced it in 1965. These are extremely sterile debates. Let us fix this problem once and for all.

In 1989, Ed Broadbent moved a motion to eliminate child poverty that was unanimously adopted. It is now 2013, and no progress has been made on this unanimous motion. For once, let us do the right thing and stop trying to scare people and make them believe that the money is not available. The money can be available—it is a matter of priorities and values.

[*English*]

Mr. Chungsen Leung (Parliamentary Secretary for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have listened to my hon. colleagues across the way, it has become clear to me that the opposition party has no understanding when it comes to the economy. New Democrats simply fail to understand the negative economic impact their proposal would have on families and communities from coast to coast to coast.

May I suggest to my NDP colleagues some background on the current state of the global economy and the risks that still exist that could derail Canada's recovery.

Business of Supply

When the global recession hit in 2008, our government helped steer Canada through immensely challenging economic times. Indeed, Canada performed better than most countries during the recession and throughout the recovery. However, despite this relatively strong economic performance, global economic challenges remain, especially in Europe and the United States, our largest trading partners.

The NDP might be interested to know that global growth has been much weaker than expected. Growth in advanced economies, such as Canada, has stabilized at a relatively slow pace, while growth in emerging markets has slowed. The Euro area continues to grapple with a sovereign debt crisis that weighs on consumer and business confidence.

That is not all. Just south of the border, slower than expected growth, as well as uncertainty about the stability of the United States' finances, pose the greatest risk to the Canadian economy. It is not surprising that for this reason, the International Monetary Fund recently revised downward its outlook for real GDP growth in both advanced and emerging economies. Indeed, the IMF projects that growth in advanced economies will average just under 1.2% in 2013.

We all know that Canada is a trading country. We depend on a strong global economy for exports, especially to the United States and Europe. While economic growth in Canada has remained resilient, Canada is not immune to weaker economic performances beyond its borders. For this reason, it is not surprising that global economic weakness has weighed on demand for our exports, which has put downward pressure on Canada's real GDP growth. Furthermore, this weak global economy has depressed the prices of our exports. This, combined with low inflation at home, has resulted in weaker nominal GDP growth.

Let me clarify what this means. It means that despite Canada's relatively strong economic performance, there are a number of economic challenges that remain in the global economy. While the NDP might prefer that Canada become a protectionist country, the reality is that economic conditions beyond our borders have impacted Canada and will continue to. Simply put, we are not out of the woods yet. Canada's economy, while improving, remains fragile.

On this point, I can speak from my own personal business experience in private practice as a business owner for over two decades. The last thing employers and workers want during uncertain economic times is higher taxes. Higher taxes on employers will reduce their ability to grow their businesses by investing in more equipment and by hiring more workers. In the case of workers, higher taxes take more of their hard-earned money out of their pockets and can cause hardship for families trying to make ends meet during turbulent economic times.

While the members of the NDP may not realize this, CPP contributions are a payroll tax on employers. To increase payroll taxes on employers, when the economy is still recovering, would not only harm Canada's economy but would kill jobs, putting many Canadians out of work.

The NDP does not seem to understand that we cannot tax our way to prosperity. Not only do New Democrats not seem to understand

this in the context of the Canada pension plan, they also do not seem to understand it in the context of business tax rates.

Just a couple of weeks ago, when I asked point blank if he would increase taxes on Canadian businesses, the leader of the NDP again confirmed that he would. Why, when other countries around the world are lowering their tax burden on job creation, would the leader of the NDP commit to increasing taxes?

I am not sure that the leader of the NDP, or anyone among the NDP ranks, understands how crippling a tax hike can be to businesses, especially when they are still trying to cope with a fragile economic recovery. It is clear that the NDP members do not, because if they did understand, they might grasp the economic consequences of their own proposal.

Indeed, the NDP wants to expand the CPP. This would effectively hike payroll taxes for employers and take money out of the pockets of hard-working Canadians. In fact, this radical plan would severely stunt economic growth. The NDP plan would force contribution rates to increase by an average of \$1,600 per year per person. This means that a family with two workers at home could be forced to pay as much as \$2,600 in additional taxes every year.

• (1740)

Not only would the NDP proposal cost Canadians their hard-earned money, but it would also cost them their jobs. The NDP plan could kill up to 70,000 in Canada. I would like to ask the members of the NDP how they feel about killing 70,000 Canadians jobs.

Not only that, I would like to know how the NDP members feel about doing something to which small business owners are strongly opposed.

I am going to share with the NDP what business owners think of its proposal. It might be interested to learn that a recent survey by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business revealed: 65% of businesses said that they would freeze or cut salaries if the Canada pension plan contribution was increased; 48% said they would reduce investment in their business; and 42% said they would decrease the number of employees.

Do not just take my word for this. I wish to quote from an economist of the *Canadian Business* magazine, Larry MacDonald, regarding how expanding the CPP would adversely affect businesses:

There doesn't seem to be a real need for it....A jump in CPP premiums makes it more expensive for businesses to maintain a workforce and could lead to job losses.

Not only would this put Canadians out of work, but it would also make things worse for those who stayed employed.

At the end of the day, the money to pay workers needs to come from somewhere. If more is being taken in the form of payroll taxes, then how are employers going to pay their employees?

According to Laura Jones, the executive vice-president of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, "small businesses report that a mandatory CPP increase would force many to lower wages and even reduce their workforce". Why, at the time when the economy is starting to rebound, would the NDP want to slap down workers by cutting their wages?

Business of Supply

How would this help Canadian families? The only thing this would do is make it more difficult for Canadians to meet their mortgage payments, enrol their children in after school activities or, even worse, afford the grocery bills.

The NDP needs to consider the ramifications of its proposal, because it seems pretty clear that it has not given this much thought as to how this would impact employers and employees.

Not only does this proposal make no economic sense, but it overlooks the fact that Canada currently has a retirement income system that is the envy of the world.

Since 2006, our government has introduced a number of measures that have enhanced the well-being of all seniors by providing them with the services and financial support they need.

It seems clear the NDP has not taken note of this, so I will take some time to explain Canada's retirement income system to it and, perhaps, it will see why it is the envy of the world.

Through the Canada pension plan, we are providing a secure, indexed, lifelong retirement benefit. To ensure the CPP remains on solid footing, it is regularly reviewed by the federal and provincial governments, which are the joint stewards of the plan.

The NDP may be interested to know that the last financial review of the CPP, completed in 2012 by federal, provincial and territorial ministers of finance, confirmed that the plan was sustainable for at least the next 75 years. This is at the current contribution rate of 9.9% of pensionable earnings. In other words, there is no need to increase the contribution rate at this time.

Canada's retirement income system also provides tax assisted private savings opportunities to help encourage Canadians to accumulate additional savings for their retirement.

I am also talking about retirement savings plans, like the registered pension plan and the registered retirement savings plan, both of which are very efficient vehicles in helping retirees.

The RPPs are sponsored by employers on a voluntary basis and can be either a defined contribution or a defined benefit with employers and, in many cases, employees responsible for making these contributions.

The RRSPs are voluntary, individual, defined contribution savings plans. Employers may provide a group RRSP for employees and may remit a share of contributions on behalf of their employees.

Contributions to RPPs and RRSPs are deductible from income for tax purposes and investment income earned in these plans is not subject to income tax until withdrawn.

The cost of the tax assistance provided on RPP and RRSP savings is currently estimated at approximately \$24 billion per year in forgone revenue for the federal government.

However, that is not all.

In addition, the tax-free savings accounts, a flexible, tax assisted savings account that was introduced by our government in budget 2008, is a valuable tool to help Canadians of all ages meet their savings goal. The tax-free savings account helps all adult Canadians,

including seniors, to meet their ongoing savings needs on a tax deferred basis. This includes those who are over the age of 71 who are required to begin withdrawing from registered savings plans like the RRSP.

However, that is not the only way our government is helping Canadians ensure they have more money available when they retire. Since 2006, our government has introduced a number of measures to assist seniors and pensioners. Together, these measures are providing about \$2.7 billion in additional annual targeted tax relief to those Canadians.

● (1745)

Let me review some of these tax saving measures.

We introduced the pension income splitting with a spouse. We increased the age credit amount by \$2,000. There was a doubling of the pension income credit by \$2,000. We increased the amount of the guaranteed income supplement that GIS recipients could earn through employment without any reduction in GIS benefits. We increased the age limit for RRSP to RRIF mandatory withdrawal conversion to age 71 from 69. We introduced the largest GIS increase in over 25 years which gave eligible low-income seniors get additional benefits of up to \$600 for single seniors and \$840 for couples, helping more than 680,000 seniors across Canada.

Overall, this action has helped remove more than 380,000 seniors from the tax roll. In fact, in 2013 a single senior can earn at least \$19,800 and a senior couple at least \$39,700 before paying federal income tax.

There is still more. Seniors also benefit substantially from the many tax reduction measures our government has introduced. For example, we have reduced the goods and services tax to 5% from 7%. We have reduced the lowest personal income tax rate to 15% from 16%. We have increased the basic personal amount that all Canadians can earn without paying federal income tax. We have increased the upper limit of the two lowest personal income tax brackets, ensuring that a greater proportion of income is taxed at a lower rate.

Clearly, our Conservative government has a strong record of supporting Canada's seniors.

However, not only is our government helping the seniors of today, but we are also introducing measures to help seniors of tomorrow. I refer to the pooled registered pension plan. While the New Democrats are advancing a proposal that we kill jobs and hurt Canada's economy, our government is working with the provinces to introduce this new pension option. The pooled registered pension plan, the PRPP, is a large scale, broad-based pension arrangement. By pooling pension savings, the costs of administering these pension plans will be spread over a large group of people which will allow plan members to benefit from lower investment management costs.

PRPPs will be available to employees with or without the participating employer as well as to the self-employed. This is significant as 60% of Canadians do not have access to a workplace pension. However, with the PRPP, these Canadians will now have access to a low cost workplace pension for the very first time. That means more money in the pockets of Canadians when they reach retirement age.

Business of Supply

Not only do PRPPs benefit employees, they also mark a significant advance for small and medium-sized businesses. Small and medium-sized businesses have, until now, experienced significant barriers to being able to offer a pension plan to their employees. However, under a PRPP, most of the administrative and legal burdens associated with a pension plan will be borne by a qualified, licensed third party administrator. Indeed, just this past September Manulife Financial became the first to be issued a licence to administer a federal PRPP.

Here is what Sue Reibel, senior vice-president, had to say about this:

PRPPs have been designed to make it simple and easy for Canadian small businesses to provide a cost effective retirement savings plan to their employees.... Today's approval marks an important first step in enabling many more businesses to help their employees put money away for their retirement...

The PRPP is an effective pension option for millions of Canadians who currently do not have access to a workplace pension plan. That is why we are urging the provinces that have not yet brought forward legislation to implement the PRPP to do so in a timely manner.

If the New Democrats really care about retirement security, they will not be advocating a proposal to kill Canadian jobs. Rather they should be supporting our government's effort to have every province in Canada implement legislation, making PRPPs available all across Canada.

Unfortunately, the NDP does not appear to think that the retirement security of Canadians is important. Believe it or not, the NDP actually voted against our government's legislation that introduced the federal PRPP framework. Indeed, the New Democrats opposed this legislation every step of the way, representing the interests of union bosses rather than the interests of Canadians. They voted against a measure that would help millions of Canadians prepare for their retirement. They pretend to be concerned about retirement security by supporting a proposal that would put Canadians out of work or, at the very least, decrease their wages. This is shameful.

Thankfully, our government is committed to ensuring the ongoing strength of Canada's retirement income system. Not only are we working to introduce measures that would actually help Canadians save for their retirement, like the PRPP, but we understand that during a fragile economic recovery is not the time to increase payroll taxes on employees. Now is simply not the appropriate time to increase the premium for the Canada pension plan.

• (1750)

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in the midst of the presentation by the Parliamentary Secretary for Multiculturalism, he made the statement, "there does not seem to be a need for it", apparently referring to the need for an increase in the CPP. Right now, only 38.8% of Canadians have access to a workplace pension plan, less than a third have access to a defined benefit plan and only 17.4% of employees in the private sector have such a plan. It seems as well that 5.8 million Canadians are in a position where they are going to experience, according to the CIBC, a 20% decrease in their standard of living upon retirement. Is that not indicative of a need to do something?

Mr. Chungsen Leung: Mr. Speaker, in my business experience, I have run corporations that had a few professionals up to 400. In

looking at Canada's overall retirement system, it is a very balanced system and there are many options for employees to choose from. For example, first and foremost, there are capital gains on the principal house someone lives in, but it is not taxed on disposition as one retires. Second, there is CPP and for those who fall under the threshold, they are supplemented by GIS and so on. There is also the pooled registered pension plan and the registered retirement savings plan. These are elements for retirement benefits.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am sure the member can appreciate that on the whole issue of pension, there is an issue of trust or lack thereof. The government has not really seen the merit of having provincial conferences. The Prime Minister, for example, has yet to meet with the premiers and he has been Prime Minister for a number of years. He chooses to meet with them on an individual basis. The CPP is a wonderful program that provides comfort for hundreds of thousands of people.

Would the member want to provide some sort of assurance that the meeting coming up later this month, even though the Prime Minister and premiers will not be there, will be given a high priority in trying to come up with ways to enhance the CPP program so that in the years ahead, more seniors will be prevented from being put into poverty-type situations?

• (1755)

Mr. Chungsen Leung: Mr. Speaker, on the question of trust, we all work better when we all trust each other, but with the Prime Minister on a very high level basis, we cannot address the issues at the ministerial level. On a regular basis, the federal Minister of Finance, the federal Minister of Health and the federal Minister of Transport individually consult with the provinces in order to arrive at the best decision and we certainly have the trust of many of the provinces that I have had occasion to visit.

Mr. Gary Schellenberger (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to pose one question. I have listened intently today to members on the other side talk about how we should gradually double Canada pension. Does everybody here realize that people have to have jobs in order to pay into Canada pension?

I had a call from a gentleman who said that it was great and asked why I was not in support of doubling the pension. He said that he really needed it. I asked him if he was on pension now and he said yes. I asked if his wife was on it and he said she was, too. I asked him if they both drew the same amount and he said no. That was because he paid more in than she did.

Another gentleman came to see me. He said that he fell off of his bicycle and was thinking about going on disability. He said that he thought he could live on \$840 a month. When I helped him apply for it, we found out he had never paid in, so he was not eligible.

A lot of the things we are talking about today do not even come under Canada pension. I would ask my hon. colleague to comment on that, please.

Mr. Chungsen Leung: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his wisely put question.

Business of Supply

There is the issue that one has to have the money first before one can spend it. I do not think the members opposite understand this simple principle. One cannot spend money one does not have.

Therefore, our government's attempt at lowering taxes, stimulating inflation, making sure that we can export our products around the world, stimulating the economy and creating jobs is a precondition to having these strong, viable pension plans. If we do not have that basic economic infrastructure, how can we have the money to spend on these nice retirement plans that they talk about?

[Translation]

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the speech by my colleague from Willowdale.

Since he was boasting about the tax measures his government has adopted, I would like to let him know that my mother, who is an average Canadian retiree, was not able to take advantage of the public transit tax credit. This is not because she is particularly poor, but simply because her retirement income is average. She is among the large number of retirees who cannot take advantage of these measures.

That said, I would like to get back to PRPPs. What I find most intriguing is that the government is bragging about creating this kind of program by claiming that it will benefit everyone. However, when we talk about improving the Canada pension plan and the Quebec pension plan, we are talking about economies of scale. *The Globe and Mail* editorial said that it was a savings plan and that it did not constitute a tax increase.

Could my colleague tell us where to find the studies that would detail the individual management costs of these PRPPs compared to the overall envelope that helps reduce the cost of the Canada pension plan?

• (1800)

[English]

Mr. Chungsen Leung: Mr. Speaker, again, I speak from my experience as a former business owner. When one has only a handful of employees, it is very hard to approach an insurance company and ask it to provide a pension plan. If I remember correctly, with a contribution of \$20,000 to \$40,000, one cannot make a pension plan out of that. One needs to have an annual contribution of almost a quarter of a million dollars or upwards in order to do that.

What the government is implementing is a pooled registered pension plan. It would be a regulated plan whereby the criteria for investment and so on would be regulated much like a bank or an insurance company. It would be portable so that as one moves in and out of jobs, or for a small business owner or the self-employed, the savings would be there and managed on a path to growth.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have been in the House all day listening to the opposition promoting an increase in CPP, but I do not think they realize the cost, which is my concern.

Right now, Canadians pay, at a maximum, about \$2,300 per year for CPP. The opposition members are talking about increasing this in a meaningful way. I wonder how they are going to sell this to Canadians. Are they suggesting that Canadians should pay many hundreds of dollars more or \$1,000 more a year? What would

happen to the take-home pay of Canadians who have commitments such as mortgages, loans and family expenses?

I believe that the NDP members are proposing to simply reduce the amount of money that Canadians can take home today to fund their scheme. I would like to ask my colleague for his comments on that.

Mr. Chungsen Leung: Mr. Speaker, if we take this money out of circulation in the economy, it hurts jobs. From an employer's standpoint, it is an additional cost of doing business. It would basically defer all of this to a future point. Therefore, if we put it in the hands of a pooled registered pension plan, it can in turn invest in the economy and make the economy grow and prosper.

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to be able to speak on this, particularly after some of the comments of the last speaker and some of the people asking questions.

Back in June 2009, the House unanimously passed a motion. I hope that the Conservatives are paying attention to this, because part of the motion that they on the government side voted unanimously for included expanding and increasing CPP, OAS and GIS, establishing a self-financing pension insurance plan, ensuring workers' pensions go to the front of the line in the case of bankruptcy proceedings, and in the interest of appropriate management, stopping the bonuses that went on with the CPP. That passed unanimously in the House. It served as a road map for the next three years.

In fact, I was the critic who put that motion before the House. I went to over 50 town hall meetings across the country from B.C. to the east coast. The reason we did all of that was the 12 million working people in Canada who have no pensions and no savings.

Now, we hear all of this talk about the PRPP. The fact of the matter is that the PRPP is nothing more than a fancified RRSP. The real flaw with the PRPP is that it is not mandatory. One of the points that was made was about the disposable income of Canadians, and we are very concerned about the disposable income of Canadians.

One of the things that members might want to know that would be helpful is that a person with a \$30,000 annual income would pay an annual increase of \$117.86. That is \$0.06 an hour, or 0.43% of their income. If they made \$47,000 a year, that would equate to \$185.43 a year. Yes, it would be matched by the employer. We are not trying to hide anything from Canadians.

We talked about a phase-in period. The purpose of the phase-in is a sensibility to the tenuous nature of the economy at this point in time, so we would take some time to develop this.

Business of Supply

We know that 93% of working Canadians today are in the Canada pension plan. We are saying to them that the OECD looked at the Canada pension plan in 2008 and said it was funded for 75 years. We agree with that. We think that it is in good shape and that it has been well managed over the years. It is a vehicle that is very important to Canadians. If we modestly increase that over seven years to phase in the payments, it is not going to double anyone's pension plan today. This is putting money away for the future.

One of the things that it does, which is very important, is it allows Canadians the vehicle to put some of their money in. These 12 million people are putting no money aside at this point in time. They are not able to, for whatever reason, or choosing not to in most cases. They are not able to participate. In 30 years' time, if we do not have a vehicle that gives them the kind of protection that the major increase to the Canada pension plan would, what is going to happen? They are going to hit a wall. They are going to hit 65 and they are going to have very little. Even if they participate in a PRPP, what good is the \$100,000 or the \$60,000 that they manage to save there, relative to the outcome that could arise from a well-invested Canada pension plan that would provide security for them and their families?

This is critically important. We are talking about future generations. We are talking about our own grandchildren here. We are not talking about today's workers to that degree. This is down the road, but it is so vitally important to people.

When I crossed the country and talked to people in towns, from Thunder Bay to the east coast. I think Barrington was the name of one community that I was in on the east coast. I was in the member for Victoria's riding for two meetings as well. Today, he has the file on behalf of the NDP and has put today's motion forward.

What is sad is that we had to reach the point of putting today's motion forward to once again push a party forward that had already agreed with us. It agreed with us in 2009, even after we had the major downturn in the economy where people understood that going forward would be somewhat difficult.

● (1805)

How difficult would it be for families if we do not do something?

We saw circumstances in the past where we, the NDP as a party, proposed non-profit daycare for families. The response from the other side was \$100 a month. Do members know what the cost of daycare is? It is in the hundreds of dollars per week. That would not even touch it.

Now we have another band-aid solution from the government in the PRPP, which does not even remotely come close to what would be needed.

I want to take members back to something I said a few minutes ago. There are 12 million working Canadians who are not prepared for the future. It is the current government's responsibility to help them prepare through the vehicle they already have.

The Canada pension plan is portable right across the country. It is a completely open vehicle. What is crucial about the Canada pension plan is that it is mandatory. How many times have members here, when they were 25, 35 or 45 years old, said that they were going to save x amount of money to prepare for this contingency, and once

they got there, had only saved half or a quarter of it? That is where the mandatory part comes in.

The employer community has a responsibility as well. That is something that some people call into question. We have to make sure it is open so that they can also take part in the Canada pension plan. We have to ensure there are vehicles within the Canada pension plan to allow everyone who works, including employers, in. We have to look at the possibilities. There is a great number of business people out there who are relying totally on the resale of their business to supply their retirement. How many businesses have we seen where, because of changes after 40 years, may not be viable or have the cash value they anticipated? Therefore, they are in a tenuous position relative to the future as well.

This is a model that could be put in place for all Canadians, for the benefit of all Canadians, to ensure dignity in retirement.

I know it is not part of today's motion, but back in June of 2009, we talked about an increase to the guaranteed income supplement. I am saying that because I want to talk again about the desperate situation some people find themselves in. There are many senior citizens who live on about \$1,400 a month. In the 50 town hall meetings, I had four occasions where I had people take me aside after the meeting and tell me that they ate cat food to get protein. That is no way for any of our seniors to have to live in this country. I am not saying that to embarrass anyone. That is a cold, hard fact of what people face who are not prepared for their retirement. Many of these people are not sophisticated in their approach to retirement.

Just before I finish, I want to stress once more that the cost of increasing the Canada pension plan benefit to the point of dignity for someone whose salary is \$30,000 would be \$117 per year or 6¢ an hour.

In closing, I would ask members one last time to take the time to look back to the June 2009 motion and to what the government unanimously supported at that time. It is the very issue we are talking about today.

● (1810)

Mr. Erin O'Toole (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleague opposite's remarks, in particular, with respect to his evident passion for seniors, which I certainly share. I remind him that it was our government that brought in income splitting for seniors, which I recognize does not apply to all seniors. However, it is an important step in our government's tool box to help Canadian families and seniors through these challenging years, including the tax-free savings account.

Throughout this debate I have not heard much from my colleagues in terms of the positive ways that we have been helping Canadians. My question to the hon. member is this. How does he think those programs are working to help Canadians? Does he not think it best to work on job creation and work with employers in the short term to get through this challenging global recession, and then look at CPP reform in the longer term?

Business of Supply

Mr. Wayne Marston: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the parliamentary secretary for his question because, yes, some of the things that the government has done have been reasonable. However, I was trying to remind the government of a promise it made in 2009. Conservatives said, in response to a unanimous motion, that they supported it. The reality is that going forward, it is going to take time for this to evolve. It will be seven years to put it into place, and before it will be of definite value to people, we are talking about 30 years.

This is not going to be a remedy for people today at this point in time. We are talking about the 12 million souls who do not have any savings and do not have any opportunity.

We are not meaning to minimize any other programs the government may have. That is not the point of the exercise today. The point today is to bring us back to understanding that we have a chance to protect future generations and allow them to live in dignity.

* * *

SITUATION IN UKRAINE

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there have been consultations among the parties, and if you seek it I think you will find unanimous consent to the following two motions:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, a debate on the subject of the situation in Ukraine take place, pursuant to Standing Order 53.1, on Tuesday, December 10, 2013; that during the debate, no quorum calls, requests for unanimous consent or dilatory motions be received by the Chair; and that any Member rising to speak during debate may indicate to the Chair that he or she will be dividing his or her time with another Member.

● (1815)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Does the hon. government House leader have the unanimous consent of the House to propose the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with regard to the second motion, there have also been discussions among the parties and you will receive unanimous consent for this motion:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, report stage and third reading of C-9, An Act respecting the election and term of office of chiefs and councillors of certain First Nations and the composition of council of those First Nations, may be taken up in the same sitting.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Does the hon. government House leader have the unanimous consent of the House to propose the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—CANADA AND QUEBEC PENSION PLANS

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): It being 6:16 p.m. and this being the final supply day in the period ending December 10, 2013, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

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 Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Call in the members.

● (1840)

[Translation]

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

(Division No. 36)

YEAS

Members

Allen (Welland)
Angus
Atamanenko
Ayala
Bellavance
Benskin
Blanchette-Lamothe
Borg
Boutin-Sweet
Brousseau
Caron
Cash
Chicoine
Choquette
Christopherson
Côté
Cullen
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Dewar

Andrews
Ashton
Aubin
Bélangier
Bennett
Blanchette
Boivin
Boulerice
Brahmi
Byrne
Casey
Charlton
Chisholm
Chow
Cleary
Crowder
Cuzner
Day
Dion

Business of Supply

Dionne Labelle
Doré Lefebvre
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Foote
Freeman
Garneau
Genest
Giguère
Goodale
Groguhé
Harris (St. John's East)
Hughes
Jones
Kellway
Larose
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
Leslie
MacAulay
Marston
Masse
May
McGuinty
Michaud
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Mourani
Nantel
Nicholls
Pacetti
Péclét
Pilon
Quach
Rankin
Raynauld
Rousseau
Sandhu
Scott
Sgro
Sims (Newton—North Delta)
St-Denis
Sullivan
Tremblay
Valerioté — 121

Donnelly
Dubé
Eyking
Fortin
Fry
Garrison
Genest-Jourdain
Godin
Gravelle
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Hsu
Jacob
Julian
Lamoureux
Laverdière
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Liu
Mai
Martin
Mathysen
McCallum
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Murray
Nash
Nunez-Melo
Papillon
Perreault
Plamondon
Rafferty
Ravignat
Regan
Saganash
Scarpaleggia
Sellah
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
sor)
Sitsabaiesan
Stewart
Thibeault
Turmel

Komarnicki
Lake
Lebel
Leitch
Leung
Lobb
Lunney
MacKenzie
McColeman
Menegakis
Miller
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Norlock
Oliver
Opitz
Paradis
Poilievre
Raiitt
Reid
Richards
Saxton
Seeback
Shory
Sopuck
Stanton
Strahl
Tilson
Trost
Truppe
Van Kesteren
Vellacott
Warawa
Watson
Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)
Wong
Yelich
Young (Vancouver South)

Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lauzon
Leaf
Lemieux
Lizon
Lukiwski
MacKay (Central Nova)
Mayes
McLeod
Merrifield
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Nicholson
O'Connor
O'Neill Gordon
O'Toole
Payne
Preston
Rajotte
Rempel
Rickford
Schellenberger
Shea
Smith
Sorenson
Storseth
Sweet
Toet
Trottier
Uppal
Van Loan
Wallace
Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Wilks
Woodworth
Young (Oakville)
Zimmer — 146

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

* * *

[English]

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES (B), 2013-14**Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board, CPC)** moved:

That the Supplementary Estimates (B) for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2014 be concurred in.

The 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 Speaker:** All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.**Some hon. members:** Yea.**The Speaker:** All those opposed will please say nay.**Some hon. members:** Nay.**The Speaker:** In my opinion the yeas have it.*And five or more members having risen:*

NAYS

Members

Ablonczy
Adler
Albas
Alexander
Allison
Anders
Armstrong
Aspin
Benoit
Bezan
Block
Breitkreuz
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Bruinooge
Calandra
Cannan
Carrie
Chong
Clement
Davidson
Del Mastro
Dreeschen
Dykstra
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Flaherty
Galipeau
Gill
Goldring
Gosal
Grewal
Hawn
Hiebert
Hoback
Jean
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kent

Adams
Aglukkaq
Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambler
Anderson
Ashfield
Baird
Bergen
Blaney
Boughen
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)
Butt
Calkins
Carmichael
Chisu
Clarke
Crockatt
Dechert
Devolin
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Fantino
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Fletcher
Gallant
Goguen
Goodyear
Gourde
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hayes
Hillyer
Holder
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kerr

Business of Supply

● (1850)

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

*(Division No. 37)***YEAS**

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambler
Anders	Anderson
Armstrong	Ashfield
Aspin	Baird
Benoit	Bergen
Bezan	Blaney
Block	Boughen
Breitkreuz	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Brown (Barrie)
Bruinooge	Butt
Calandra	Calkins
Cannan	Carmichael
Carrie	Chisu
Chong	Clarke
Clement	Crockatt
Davidson	Dechert
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dreeshen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra	Fantino
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Flaherty	Fletcher
Galipeau	Gallant
Gill	Goguen
Goldring	Goodyear
Gosal	Gourde
Grewal	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hayes
Hiebert	Hillyer
Hoback	Holder
Jean	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kent	Kerr
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lake	Lauzon
Lebel	Leaf
Leitch	Lemieux
Leung	Lizon
Lobb	Lukiwski
Lunney	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	May
Mayes	McColeman
McLeod	Menegakis
Merrifield	Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Nicholson	Norlock
O'Connor	Oliver
O'Neill Gordon	Opitz
O'Toole	Paradis
Payne	Poilievre
Preston	Raith
Rajotte	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Rickford	Saxton
Schellenberger	Seeback
Shea	Shory
Smith	Sopuck
Sorenson	Stanton
Storseth	Strahl
Sweet	Tilson
Toet	Trost
Trottier	Truppe
Uppal	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vellacott
Wallace	Warawa
Warkentin	Watson
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	

Wilks
Woodworth
Young (Oakville)
Zimmer— 147

Wong
Yelich
Young (Vancouver South)

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Ashton
Atamanenko	Aubin
Ayala	Bélangier
Bellavance	Bennett
Benskin	Blanchette
Blanchette-Lamothe	Boivin
Borg	Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet	Brahmi
Brosseau	Byrne
Caron	Casey
Cash	Charlton
Chicoine	Chisholm
Choquette	Chow
Christopherson	Cleary
Côté	Crowder
Cullen	Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Day
Dewar	Dion
Dionne Labelle	Donnelly
Doré Lefebvre	Dubé
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Eyking	Foote
Fortin	Freeman
Fry	Garneau
Garrison	Genest
Genest-Jourdain	Giguère
Godin	Goodale
Gravelle	Groguhé
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)
Hsu	Hughes
Jacob	Jones
Julian	Kellway
Lamoureux	Larose
Laverdière	LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leslie
Liu	MacAulay
Mai	Marston
Martin	Masse
Mathysen	McCallum
McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Michaud	Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)	Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Mourani	Murray
Nantel	Nash
Nicholls	Nunez-Melo
Pacetti	Papillon
Péclet	Perreault
Pilon	Plamondon
Quach	Rafferty
Rankin	Ravignat
Raynault	Regan
Rousseau	Saganash
Sandhu	Scarpaleggia
Scott	Sellah
Sgro	Simmis (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind- sor)
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	Sitsabaiesan
St-Denis	Stewart
Sullivan	Thibeault
Tremblay	Turmel
Valeriote— 121	

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Hon. Tony Clement moved that Bill C-19, An Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the financial year ending March 31, 2014 be read the first time and printed.

Business of Supply

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

Hon. Tony Clement moved that the bill be read the second time and referred to a committee of the whole.

Hon. John Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I believe that if you seek it, you shall find consent to apply the results of the previous vote to the current vote, with Conservative members voting yes.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to proceed in this fashion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nicole Turmel: Mr. Speaker, we agree to apply the vote, and the NDP will vote against the motion.

[*English*]

Ms. Judy Foote: Mr. Speaker, we agree to apply the results of the previous vote to this vote, with the Liberals voting no.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Louis Plamondon: Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois will vote against the motion.

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Mr. Speaker, I will be voting against the motion and I agree to the same process.

[*English*]

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, the Green Party will apply, and votes yes.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: Mr. Speaker, I stand with the Conservative Party.

[*Translation*]

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

(Division No. 38)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambler
Anders	Anderson
Armstrong	Ashfield
Aspin	Baird
Benoit	Bergen
Bezan	Blaney
Block	Boughen
Breitkreuz	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Brown (Barrie)
Bruinooge	Butt
Calandra	Calkins
Cannan	Carmichael
Carrie	Chisu
Chong	Clarke
Clement	Crockatt
Davidson	Dechert
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dreeshen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra	Fantino
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Flaherty	Fletcher
Galipeau	Gallant
Gill	Goguen
Goldring	Goodyear
Gosal	Gourde

Grewal	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hayes
Hiebert	Hillyer
Hoback	Holder
Jean	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kent	Kerr
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lake	Lauzon
Lebel	Leaf
Leitch	Lemieux
Leung	Lizon
Lobb	Lukiwski
Lunney	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	May
Mayes	McColeman
McLeod	Menegakis
Merrifield	Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Nicholson	Norlock
O'Connor	Oliver
O'Neill Gordon	Opitz
O'Toole	Paradis
Payne	Poillievre
Preston	Raïtt
Rajotte	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Rickford	Saxton
Schellenberger	Seeback
Shea	Shory
Smith	Sopuck
Sorenson	Stanton
Storseth	Strahl
Sweet	Tilson
Toet	Trost
Trottier	Truppe
Uppal	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vellacott
Wallace	Warawa
Warkentin	Watson
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	
Wilks	Wong
Woodworth	Yelich
Young (Oakville)	Young (Vancouver South)
Zimmer — 147	

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Ashton
Atamanenko	Aubin
Ayala	Bélangier
Bellavance	Bennett
Benskin	Blanchette
Blanchette-Lamothe	Blivin
Borg	Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet	Brahmi
Brousseau	Byrne
Caron	Casey
Cash	Charlton
Chicoine	Chisholm
Choquette	Chow
Christopherson	Cleary
Côté	Crowder
Cullen	Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Day
Dewar	Dion
Dionne Labelle	Donnelly
Doré Lefebvre	Dubé
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Eyking	Foote
Fortin	Freeman
Fry	Garneau
Garrison	Genest
Genest-Jourdain	Giguère
Godin	Goodale
Gravelle	Groguié
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)
Hsu	Hughes
Jacob	Jones

Business of Supply

Julian	Kellway
Lamoureux	Larose
Laverdière	LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leslie
Liu	MacAulay
Mai	Marston
Martin	Masse
Mathysen	McCallum
McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Michaud	Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)	Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Mourani	Murray
Nantel	Nash
Nicholls	Nunez-Melo
Pacetti	Papillon
Péclet	Perreault
Pilon	Plamondon
Quach	Rafferty
Rankin	Ravignat
Raynault	Regan
Rousseau	Saganash
Sandhu	Scarpaleggia
Scott	Sellah
Sgro	Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind- sor)
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	Sitsabaiesan
St-Denis	Stewart
Sullivan	Thibeault
Tremblay	Turmel
Valerioté— 121	

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Accordingly the bill stands referred to a committee of the whole.

I do now leave the chair for the House to go into committee of the whole.

Bill read the second time and the House went into committee of the whole thereon, Mr. Devolin in the chair.)

The Deputy Chair: The House is now in committee of the whole on Bill C-19.

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP): Mr. Chair, I would like the President of the Treasury Board to confirm to the House that the bill is in its usual form.

(On clause 2)

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Chair, yes, the presentation of this bill is identical to that used during the previous supply period.

[English]

The Deputy Chair: Shall clause 2 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.
(Clause 2 agreed to)

The Deputy Chair: Shall clause 3 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.
(Clause 3 agreed to)

The Deputy Chair: Shall clause 4 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Clause 4 agreed to)

The Deputy Chair: Shall clause 5 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.
(Clause 5 agreed to)

The Deputy Chair: Shall clause 6 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.
(Clause 6 agreed to)

The Deputy Chair: Shall clause 7 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.
(Clause 7 agreed to)

The Deputy Chair: Shall schedule 1 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.
(Schedule 1 agreed to)

The Deputy Chair: Shall schedule 2 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.
(Schedule 2 agreed to)

The Deputy Chair: Shall clause 1 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.
(Clause 1 agreed to)

The Deputy Chair: Shall the preamble carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.
(Preamble agreed to)

The Deputy Chair: Shall the title carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.
(Title agreed to)

The Deputy Chair: Shall the bill carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.
(Bill agreed to)

The Deputy Chair: Shall I rise and report the bill?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Mr. Speaker, the committee of the whole has considered Bill C-19 and directed me to report it without amendment.

(Bill reported)

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board, CPC) moved that the bill be concurred in at report stage.

•(1855)

Hon. John Duncan: Mr. Speaker, if you seek it I believe you would find consent to apply the results of the previous vote at the second reading vote to the current vote with current Conservative members minus the member for Brampton West voting yes.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to proceed in this fashion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Translation]

Ms. Nycole Turmel: Mr. Speaker, we agree to apply the vote, and the NDP will vote no.

[English]

Ms. Judy Foote: Mr. Speaker, the Liberals agree and will vote no.

[Translation]

Mr. Louis Plamondon: Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois votes no.

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Mr. Speaker, I vote no.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, the Green Party votes yes.

[English]

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: Mr. Speaker, I will be voting yes.

[Translation]

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

(Division No. 39)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambler
Anders	Anderson
Armstrong	Ashfield
Aspin	Baird
Benoit	Bergen
Bezan	Blaney
Block	Boughen
Breitkreuz	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Brown (Barrie)
Bruinooge	Butt
Calandra	Calkins
Cannan	Carmichael
Carrie	Chisu
Chong	Clarke
Clement	Crockatt
Davidson	Dechert
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dreeschen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra	Fantino
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Flaherty	Fletcher
Galipeau	Gallant
Gill	Goguen
Goldring	Goodyear

Gosal
Grewal
Hawn
Hiebert
Hoback
Jean
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kent
Komarnicki
Lake
Lebel
Leitch
Leung
Lobb
Lunney
MacKenzie
Mayes
McLeod
Merrifield
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Nicholson
O'Connor
O'Neill Gordon
O'Toole
Payne
Preston
Rajotte
Rempel
Rickford
Schellenberger
Shory
Sopuck
Stanton
Strahl
Tilson
Trost
Truppe
Van Kesteren
Vellacott
Warawa
Watson
Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)
Wong
Yelich
Young (Vancouver South)

Business of Supply

Gourde
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hayes
Hillyer
Holder
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kerr
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lauzon
Leef
Lemieux
Lizon
Lukiwski
MacKay (Central Nova)
May
McColeman
Menegakis
Miller
Norlock
Oliver
Opitz
Paradis
Poilievre
Raiitt
Reid
Richards
Saxton
Shea
Smith
Sorenson
Storseth
Sweet
Toet
Trottier
Uppal
Van Loan
Wallace
Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Wilks
Woodworth
Young (Oakville)
Zimmer— 146

NAYS

Members

Andrews
Ashton
Aubin
Bélanger
Bennett
Blanchette
Boivin
Boulerice
Brahmi
Byrne
Casey
Charlton
Chisholm
Chow
Cleary
Crowder
Cuzner
Day
Dion
Donnelly
Dubé
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Foote
Freeman
Garneau
Genest
Giguère
Goodale
Groguié
Harris (St. John's East)
Hughes
Jones

Business of Supply

Julian	Kellway
Lamoureux	Larose
Laverdière	LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leslie
Liu	MacAulay
Mai	Marston
Martin	Masse
Mathysse	McCallum
McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Michaud	Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)	Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Mourani	Murray
Nantel	Nash
Nicholls	Nunez-Melo
Pacetti	Papillon
Pécllet	Perreault
Pilon	Plamondon
Quach	Rafferty
Rankin	Ravignat
Raynault	Regan
Rousseau	Saganash
Sandhu	Scarpaleggia
Scott	Sellah
Sgro	Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	Sitsabaiesan
St-Denis	Stewart
Sullivan	Thibeault
Tremblay	Turmel
Valeriotte — 121	

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

[English]

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Translation]

Hon. Tony Clement moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

[English]

Hon. John Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I believe that if you seek it you shall find consent to apply the results of the previous vote to the current vote with Conservative members voting yes.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to proceed in this fashion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Turmel: Mr. Speaker, we agree to apply the vote, and the NDP will vote no.

[English]

Ms. Judy Foote: Mr. Speaker, the Liberals agree to apply the results of the previous motion and will be voting no.

[Translation]

Mr. Louis Plamondon: Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois is voting no.

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Mr. Speaker, I am voting no.

[English]

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, the Green Party agrees to apply and votes yes.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: Mr. Speaker, I vote yes.

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

(Division No. 40)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambler
Anders	Anderson
Armstrong	Ashfield
Aspin	Baird
Benoit	Bergen
Bezan	Blaney
Block	Boughen
Breitkreuz	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Brown (Barrie)
Bruinooge	Butt
Calandra	Calkins
Cannan	Carmichael
Carrie	Chisu
Chong	Clarke
Clement	Crockatt
Davidson	Dechert
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dreeshen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra	Fantino
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Flaherty	Fletcher
Galipeau	Gallant
Gill	Goguen
Goldring	Goodyear
Gosal	Gourde
Grewal	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hayes
Hiebert	Hillyer
Hoback	Holder
Jean	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kent	Kerr
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lake	Lauzon
Lebel	Leaf
Leitch	Lemieux
Leung	Lizon
Lobb	Lukiwski
Lunney	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	May
Mayes	McColeman
McLeod	Menegakis
Merrifield	Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Nicholson	Norlock
O'Connor	Oliver
O'Neill Gordon	Opitz
O'Toole	Paradis
Payne	Poillievre
Preston	Raïtt
Rajotte	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Rickford	Saxton
Schellenberger	Shea
Shory	Smith
Sopuck	Sorenson
Stanton	Storseth
Strahl	Sweet
Tilson	Toet
Trost	Trottier
Truppe	Uppal
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vellacott	Wallace
Warawa	Warkentin
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)	Wilks

Business of Supply

Wong
Yelich
Young (Vancouver South)

Woodworth
Young (Oakville)
Zimmer — 146

● (1900)

[*Translation*]

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)
Angus
Atamanenko
Ayala
Bellavance
Benskin
Blanchette-Lamothe
Borg
Boutin-Sweet
Brosseau
Caron
Cash
Chicoine
Choquette
Christopherson
Côté
Cullen
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Dewar
Dionne Labelle
Doré Lefebvre
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Eyking
Fortin
Fry
Garrison
Genest-Jourdain
Godin
Gravelle
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Hsu
Jacob
Julian
Lamoureux
Laverdière
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Liu
Mai
Martin
Mathysen
McGuinty
Michaud
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Mourani
Nantel
Nicholls
Pacetti
Péclet
Pilon
Quach
Rankin
Raynault
Rousseau
Sandhu
Scott
Sgro
Sims (Newton—North Delta)
St-Denis
Sullivan
Tremblay
Valeriotte — 121

Andrews
Ashton
Aubin
Bélanger
Bennett
Blanchette
Boivin
Boulerice
Brahmi
Byrne
Casey
Charlton
Chisholm
Chow
Cleary
Crowder
Cuzner
Day
Dion
Donnelly
Dubé
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Foote
Freeman
Garneau
Genest
Giguère
Goodale
Grogulé
Harris (St. John's East)
Hughes
Jones
Kellway
Larose
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
Leslie
MacAulay
Marston
Masse
McCallum
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Murray
Nash
Nunez-Melo
Papillon
Perreault
Plamondon
Rafferty
Ravignat
Regan
Saganash
Scarpaleggia
Sellah
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
sor)
Sitsabaiesan
Stewart
Thibeault
Turmel

ECONOMIC ACTION PLAN 2013 ACT NO. 2

The House resumed from December 6 consideration of the motion that Bill C-4, A second act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 21, 2013 and other measures, be read the third time and passed.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at third reading stage of Bill C-4.

● (1905)

[*English*]

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

(*Division No. 41*)

YEAS

Members

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

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.
(Bill read the third time and passed)

Adjournment Proceedings

Raitt	Rajotte
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Rickford
Saxton	Schellenberger
Shea	Shory
Smith	Sopuck
Sorenson	Stanton
Storseth	Strahl
Sweet	Tilson
Toet	Trost
Trottier	Truppe
Uppal	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vellacott
Wallace	Warawa
Warkentin	Watson
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	
Wilks	Wong
Woodworth	Yelich
Young (Oakville)	Young (Vancouver South)
Zimmer— 145	

Sitsabaiesan	St-Denis
Stewart	Sullivan
Thibeault	Tremblay
Turmel	Valeriote— 122

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

(Bill read the third time and passed)

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*Translation*]

ETHICS

Ms. Ève Péclet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to get clearer answers about the Senate scandal, which involves the Prime Minister's Office and senators.

I asked a question regarding ethics in the Prime Minister's Office. In fact, I asked several questions without ever getting any answers. This evening, I hope that the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs will be able to give me clear and precise answers on the involvement of the Prime Minister's Office in the Mike Duffy scandal, particularly its interference in this affair. I will explain what I mean in my speech today.

According to Canadian parliamentary tradition and according to the Prime Minister, the Senate is an independent institution that should ultimately be a separate branch of the legislative body of the House of Commons.

That is why everyone is wondering what business the Prime Minister's Office has getting involved in Senate affairs. Why did a senator, Ms. Stewart Olsen, say that she was at the service of the Prime Minister's Office?

Here is the fundamental question that he must answer: what business does the Prime Minister's Office have getting involved in the affairs of the Senate, an institution that, according to the Prime Minister, is independent from the legislative body of the House of Commons? The Prime Minister's Office should never have been involved in such a scandal.

When we learned about the scandal surrounding the repayment of Senator Mike Duffy's expenses, the Prime Minister immediately hit the roof saying that he had nothing to do with it, that he knew nothing about it and that he was not responsible for what happened in the Senate.

Unfortunately, a few days later, the Prime Minister changed his story by saying that Nigel Wright was responsible and was taking all the blame. Today, we want to know who was aware of this orchestrated scheme. Whose hands are dirty?

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Ashton
Atamanenko	Aubin
Ayala	Bélanger
Bellavance	Bennett
Benskin	Blanchette
Blanchette-Lamothe	Boivin
Borg	Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet	Brahmi
Brosseau	Byrne
Caron	Casey
Cash	Charlton
Chicoine	Chisholm
Choquette	Chow
Christopherson	Cleary
Côté	Crowder
Cullen	Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Day
Dewar	Dion
Dionne Labelle	Donnelly
Doré Lefebvre	Dubé
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Eyking	Footo
Fortin	Freeman
Fry	Gameau
Garrison	Genest
Genest-Jourdain	Giguère
Godin	Goodale
Gravelle	Groguhé
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)
Hsu	Hughes
Jacob	Jones
Julian	Kellway
Lamoureux	Larose
Laverdière	LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leslie
Liu	MacAulay
Mai	Marston
Martin	Masse
Mathysen	May
McCallum	McGuinty
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	Michaud
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)	Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)	Mourani
Murray	Nantel
Nash	Nicholls
Nunez-Melo	Pacetti
Papillon	Péclet
Perrault	Pilon
Plamondon	Quach
Rafferty	Rankin
Ravignat	Raynault
Regan	Rousseau
Saganash	Sandhu
Scarpaleggia	Scott
Sellah	Sgro
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)	
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	

Adjournment Proceedings

Now that we know that, unfortunately, the Conservatives interfere in Senate affairs, we need to know who in the Prime Minister's Office is responsible for breaking the fundamental rules of our Parliament.

• (1910)

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Of course, Mr. Speaker, the RCMP are reviewing that right now.

Ms. Ève Péclet: This is so ridiculous, Mr. Speaker. I am speechless. I cannot even believe this.

I know the parliamentary secretary does not want to be here right now. He tries to answer questions during question period. However, I am so astonished. He has four minutes to at least make his point tonight, and he stands up and makes no points at all.

[*Translation*]

I am going to ask him my question one last time.

Who in the Prime Minister's Office is responsible for giving orders to senators? Ms. Stewart Olsen clearly indicated that she was at the service of the Prime Minister's Office. Who then in the Prime Minister's Office is responsible for giving the orders to senators?

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Calandra: Of course, Mr. Speaker, the senators are responsible for their own decisions.

HEALTH

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last Monday, December 2, the member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca and I raised a serious question during question period about the access of foreign governments to the private medical information of Canadian citizens.

The case involves a constituent of mine, Mrs. Ellen Richardson, a paraplegic who was flying down to the United States to participate in a \$6,000 cruise in the Caribbean, courtesy of the March of Dimes. She was prevented from doing so by the U.S. border services at Pearson airport. They had on their files a reported mental illness episode from June of last year. Although Mrs. Richardson was guilty of no crime, in order for her to continue her trip the U.S. border services required her to seek, at some considerable expense, a U.S. appointed doctor to determine her capacity to travel before granting her access to the United States. Needless to say, this was not possible given the timelines and Mrs. Richardson lost her cruise and her money.

This episode raises troubling questions about how a foreign government could gain access to the private medical information of Canadians. Mrs. Richardson, we have discovered, is not alone. According to the Psychiatric Patient Advocate Office, a Government of Ontario agency, dozens of Canadians from Ontario have been stopped at the border by U.S. officials on this basis in recent years. That is, they were stopped because the U.S. border services had information about their health, information that is by law in Canada, confidential.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, in reply to my question said that the government respects the privacy of Canadian health information, but that such health information is the responsibility of the provinces. The fact is that the responsibility for sharing Canadian information with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security lies with the RCMP through its Canadian Police Information Centre and the RCMP is clearly the responsibility of the federal government. This is where we believe the federal government should be acting to ensure that private health information, unrelated to criminal records, that is contained in CPIC is kept confidential and not shared with foreign governments.

What happened to Mrs. Richardson at the border was not only crushing for her, it raises questions for all Canadians. How did her personal medical information end up in the hands of U.S. border guards? Did a Canadian entity share this information with U.S. authorities? If so, why? Was it a mistake, or was this information shared with U.S. authorities according to Canadian government policy? Who has access to it? What other information is being shared?

It turns out there is very little control over what information the RCMP collects and stores in this database and how it is to be accessed. Surely there is a difference between criminal records, outstanding warrants, stolen property and criminal surveillance, which are all legitimate items to share with law enforcement agencies, and 911 calls for assistance, police reports where no charges were laid and other non-criminal activities. Surely there are reasonable limits to what Big Brother should know and share with other governments.

Ellen Richardson broke no laws, yet her personal information ended up in the hands of the U.S. government. Therefore, the question still remains. Is the government, which says it is committed to ensuring the privacy of all Canadians' health information, willing to take steps to do so? Is the government ready to publicly review the criteria of what information in the RCMP's Canadian Police Information Centre can be accessed and by whom, in order to assure Canadians that non-criminal health information about them remains confidential? Canadians deserve better.

• (1915)

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to respond to the question put to the House by the member for York South—Weston regarding the sharing of information with the United States.

Police services collect and add information to the Canadian Police Information Centre system, also known as CPIC, in the interests of public safety. Leading mental health organizations support the placement of information in the CPIC system on individuals who may pose a danger to themselves or to others. The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health supports inclusion of information on the CPIC system on individuals who may pose a danger to themselves or others.

Adjournment Proceedings

While the RCMP maintains the infrastructure of the CPIC system as part of its national police services, the information is added, maintained and modified by each contributing police agency in accordance with CPIC policy. CPIC contains information on charges; warrants; persons of interest, including persons who have attempted suicide; stolen property and vehicles; and public safety investigations. This information, however, does not include personal medical information.

I encourage any individual who has concerns regarding the accuracy of their CPIC record to contact the RCMP. Additionally, I would like to inform the member that the Government of Canada has no authority to direct other governments to waive their requirements for the purpose of entry into their country.

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the attempt at a response, but, unfortunately, it leaves a whole bunch of unanswered questions.

The agent in the U.S. did, in fact, have her medical information in front of him. He knew that she had been hospitalized. She had not shared that information with anyone and the government says that was not shared. Then how did he get it? It was shared and placed on the database. That information ought not to be shared.

With regard to persons accessing their records, he says to contact the RCMP. Unfortunately, the RCMP requires more personal information to be shared with it before it will grant access to CPIC. It requires applicants to actually provide fingerprints before it will share any information on the CPIC records with an individual and in some cases has refused to share that information with an individual. It is not an appropriate answer to suggest that this person can just go and see what information is there.

• (1920)

Mr. Colin Carrie: Mr. Speaker, the CPIC system was established in 1972 as a tool for police agencies to share information regarding crime and associated criminals. It is now the primary public and officer safety tool used by police, public safety and law enforcement agencies across Canada.

Operated under the stewardship of the RCMP on behalf of the CPIC user community, CPIC is the system that stores and retrieves law enforcement information submitted by authorized agencies. The RCMP acts as the custodian of this information. Information contained in CPIC is owned by the originating agency and the police service of jurisdiction would decide whether to enter observed behaviour such as mental health issues or attempted suicide into the CPIC system. This is done for public safety reasons.

The exchange of information between law enforcement agencies, both Canadian and American, is essential for the detection, prevention and suppression of crime and for national security purposes. Entry into any foreign country is governed by the country's laws and policies.

• (1925)

[Translation]

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Ms. Manon Perreault (Montcalm, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on December 3, I tried to get an answer about the delayed follow-up

report on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Canada ratified the convention in 2010 and had two years to produce its report; therefore we should have received this report in April 2012. It is now December 9, 2013, and we still have no news of this report.

However, this obligation is clearly outlined in article 35 of the convention. To refresh the Conservatives' memory, the following is an excerpt from this article:

1. Each State Party shall submit to the Committee...a comprehensive report on measures taken to give effect to its obligations under the present Convention and on the progress made in that regard, within two years after the entry into force of the present Convention...

We have to understand that the purpose of this convention is to promote and protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of persons with disabilities and to ensure respect for the dignity of each and every one of them.

My Conservative colleague simply ignored the question. Instead of answering me, he thanked me for my attendance at the International Day of Disabled Persons. That has nothing to do with my question. I must admit that I did not expect to get an answer to my question, much less a reason for the delay, but I would have greatly appreciated being given a possible date for the release of this report.

I am very well aware that there are various programs for people with disabilities, but that is not the issue.

I want to know whether there have been any advances or setbacks in terms of providing support for people with disabilities.

At the risk of repeating myself, people with disabilities, as a group, still require more attention and increased support from all stakeholders in our society, because they often live in poverty and still face too many significant obstacles to their integration in society.

All the necessary measures to provide these people with better support must be based on the understanding that the situations that challenge them result from their interactions in a physical or social environment that does not take into account their functional characteristics or specific needs.

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is a powerful international legislative tool that must guide all countries that have ratified it to ensure that persons with disabilities can exercise their rights on an equal basis especially by providing the appropriate supports to do so.

Although Canada was closely involved in developing the convention's content and the process leading to its adoption, the Conservative government has not shown leadership with respect to its implementation in our country. Instead, it has been quite indifferent and has shown little interest in having Canadians with disabilities exercise their rights.

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In my opinion, in order to show the leadership required to ensure the implementation of the convention, the Canadian government must do the following: first, sign the optional protocol to the convention in order to clearly demonstrate to the international community that it is engaged in a process that will guarantee that all Canadians with disabilities can exercise their rights; second, establish a Canadian plan to implement the convention and to give the Canadian Human Rights Commission the mandate to put in place an oversight mechanism together with the provinces and the territories; third, respect the spirit of the convention by ensuring that organizations that represent persons with disabilities are involved in the process to oversee its application.

I will repeat my question: when do the Conservatives plan on presenting the follow-up report and implementing the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to create a more accessible and inclusive Canada?

[*English*]

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our Conservative government has delivered measurable results for Canadians living with a disability. No other government has done more to support persons with disabilities find employment than our government.

In the most recent economic action plan 2013, a series of measures were introduced to strengthen the social and economic inclusion of Canadians with disabilities. We are providing \$222 million per year toward a new generation of labour market agreements for people with disabilities to better meet the employment needs of Canadian businesses and improve employment prospects for people with disabilities. This will ensure that the training programming that is being delivered is demand driven and involves employers.

Beginning in 2015, the opportunities fund for people with disabilities will be funded on an ongoing basis to help people with disabilities train for in-demand jobs. The opportunities fund provided over 5,500 people in the last fiscal year with specific training for available jobs. More than \$2 million will be spent to support the creation of an employers forum, building on the recommendation from the Panel on Labour Market Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities.

The enabling accessibility fund will be funded at \$50 million per year on an ongoing basis to continue to improve access to facilities across Canada. Since it was created by our Conservative government, over 850 projects have been funded. For the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, \$7 million will be earmarked to support research related to the labour market participation of people with disabilities.

Finally, the social development partnerships program disability component will provide \$11 million annually to support a wide range of projects designed to improve social inclusion and tackle barriers faced by people with disabilities.

We are delivering results for persons with disabilities to ensure they can participate in the labour market. It is our goal that all Canadians can benefit from our government's priority of jobs, growth and long-term prosperity.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Manon Perreault: Mr. Speaker, the NDP made a firm commitment to do whatever it takes to ensure that persons with disabilities have full access to all of the rights that they share with all Canadians.

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is one sure way to make that happen. We will continue to pressure the current government to take the necessary action to maximize the impact of the convention on the day-to-day lives of persons with disabilities.

On December 3, I asked the government why no status report on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has been released. My Conservative colleague listed all kinds of programs, but as I said, I am very familiar with those programs.

That being said, I still do not understand why the Conservatives are not taking this issue seriously or why they have not taken the necessary measures to implement the convention to build an increasingly inclusive Canada. This would be a first step toward recognizing the day-to-day efforts of persons with disabilities and their contribution to society.

My question is simple, and I would like a simple answer.

[*English*]

Mr. Colin Carrie: Mr. Speaker, the government remains committed to eliminating barriers and creating opportunities for people with disabilities.

There are over 800,000 working age Canadians who are not working but whose disability does not prevent them from doing so. Of this group, 340,000 people have post-secondary education. These individuals are a significant untapped pool of talent with major contributions to make to Canadian society.

Economic action plan 2013 provides concrete measures to help strengthen the economic and social inclusion of millions of Canadians with disabilities. The big question is this. Why did the member opposite and her party vote against the economic action plan?

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:29 p.m.)

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