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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, June 11, 2014

—

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, June 11, 2014

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

● (1405)

[English]

The Speaker: It being Wednesday, we will now have the singing of the national anthem, led by the hon. member for LaSalle—Émard.

[Members sang the national anthem]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

ANTI-SPAM RULES

Mr. Jay Aspin (Nipissing—Timiskaming, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government does not believe Canadians should receive emails they do not want or did not ask to receive. That is why we introduced and passed legislation that would prohibit unsolicited text messages, including cellphone spam.

These new rules will effectively protect consumers from spam and other threats that lead to harassment, identity theft, and fraud, giving Canadian businesses clarity so they can continue to compete in the online marketplace.

Canadian businesses say that they are concerned about being compliant with the law by the July 1 deadline. All business owners can be assured that although these new rules come into effect soon, they will have 36 months to renew consent with their existing clients.

Our government has taken every step to limit the impact on Canadian business, while continuing to stand up for Canadian consumers.

For more information, consumers and business owners should visit fightspam.gc.ca.

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THE CHANGE AGENTS

Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week I had the opportunity to attend the Ottawa premiere of the feature-film drama entitled *The Change Agents*. The event was co-

hosted by the Citizens Climate Lobby and by my NDP colleague, the member for British Columbia Southern Interior.

The writer/director of the *The Change Agents*, Robyn Sheppard, used to reside in Toronto—Danforth, which is one of Canada's film-making hubs. She moved out west to Nelson, B.C., where she is the drama teacher at L.V. Rogers Secondary School.

The Change Agents is the story of dedicated high school students mobilizing co-students to make a strong, passionate statement for environmental protection, especially in relation to the tar sands.

L.V. Rogers' students were involved in all aspects of the film-making process, both in front of the camera—like Lucy Carver Brennan, who plays Ruby in the film—and behind the camera.

They, and the film itself, demonstrate that young people's despair over ecological destruction can be transformed into the kind of citizen engagement that generates hope we may yet act in time to step back from the edge of the cliff.

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CALGARY NORTHEAST

Mr. Devinder Shory (Calgary Northeast, CPC): Mr. Speaker, community organizations and their volunteers are vital for happy, healthy, and connected communities. I am proud to say that the hardest-working riding of Calgary Northeast has a multitude of active community organizations.

As Canada Day and the greatest outdoor show on earth, the Calgary Stampede, approach, I would like to extend an invitation to all members of the House to come to participate in the diverse Canada Day celebrations and Stampede breakfasts and barbecues being organized by all the great communities and cultural organizations in Calgary Northeast.

In particular, I would like to recognize the Muslim community in Calgary, which will be hosting its annual community celebrations as it focuses on fasting and prayer during Ramadan.

Happy Ramadan to all Muslim communities.

We thank all the volunteers for getting involved in their communities and making Calgary Northeast a great place to live, work, and raise a family.

*Statements by Members***CO-OPERATIVES**

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank all of my colleagues who attended the first three meetings of the all-party caucus on co-operatives. Since our first meeting in March, this caucus has allowed for strides to be made in the relationship between the government and co-ops.

During today's meeting, we had the opportunity to hear from the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada and Fédération des coopératives funéraires du Québec.

Housing co-ops occupy an important sector of the housing market and offer alternatives for residents. Indeed, the co-operative sector presents a range of opportunities and could greatly benefit from increased parliamentary support and continued government assistance.

CHF Canada held a rally as part of its “You Hold the Key! - Fix the Co-op Housing Crunch!” campaign last Wednesday to bring the attention of the government to upcoming cuts that threaten co-op housing residents.

It is my hope that ongoing efforts of the all-party caucus on co-operatives, in partnership with the co-op community, will continue to benefit Canadians and raise awareness about the important role co-operatives play in the economy and in our communities, each and every one of us.

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WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

Ms. Joan Crockatt (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know it is almost Father's Day, but it gives me great pleasure to stand today to honour one of my heroes, my mother, Marjorie Nattress, who is with us.

She is a true-blue Albertan, the kind of person who helped build Canada. Her mother had a political bent and held a “Pink Tea” for Nellie McClung, when the Famous Five were fighting to achieve some of the great “firsts” for women in Canada.

My mother was the first in her family to graduate from university. As a young public health nurse, she and my dad ran a tiny hospital in the coal mining town of Luscar.

Moving to Lloydminster, she started the first CPR course and the first candy strippers to train young girls in nursing. After seeing some women on the streets fleeing abuse, she co-founded Interval Home, one of the first women's shelters in Alberta. She has been an outspoken advocate against violence against women and girls, which is also a passion of our government.

When they retired, she and my dad served as medical missionaries in Lesotho.

She is a pillar of her church and the strength of our family. I thank mom for being a trailblazer.

● (1410)

[Translation]

PHILIPPE MASSICOTTE AND THOMAS DUPRÉ

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have often said that young people are not our future, they are our present. Thanks to their creativity, Philippe Massicotte and Thomas Dupré, graduates of St. Joseph Seminary in Trois-Rivières, will represent Canada at Expo-Sciences International in Brussels next July.

Their invention, both simple and clever, reminds people that good posture is an important part of preventing back pain, which costs the Canadian economy \$4 billion a year. Their invention won them the Youth Science Canada Excellence Award, the S.M. Blair Family Foundation Award, the Université du Québec award, and the Synapse award, presented by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research.

While the talent and hard work of these two young men deserve recognition, I would like to take this opportunity to also congratulate the parents and teachers who support them on a daily basis.

Philippe Massicotte and Thomas Dupré, you make us proud, and the people of Trois-Rivières join me in congratulating you and encouraging you to keep dreaming big.

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[English]

CANADA-HUNGARY RELATIONS

Mr. Corneliu Chisu (Pickering—Scarborough East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate half a century of diplomatic relations between Canada and Hungary. It was exactly 50 years ago, on June 11, 1964, that Canada and Hungary established diplomatic relations. Still under Soviet domination at the time, Hungary was unable to act entirely freely, but establishing diplomatic relations with countries like Canada eventually helped it to achieve independence and democracy.

The freedom fight of 1956 was a bold attempt by Hungarians to establish solidarity away from the long arm of Soviet and Communist rule. Many Hungarians fled their homes afterward, and 38,000 were welcomed to Canada with warmth and compassion, where they have made a significant contribution to our national wealth.

Since 1989, the year of regime change in eastern Europe, Canada and Hungary have become close allies.

Canadian–Hungarian relations demonstrate that democracy, freedom, the rule of law, and citizen-driven governance are the only solid foundations for prosperous societies in the 21st century, and indicate a strong commitment to further deepening diplomatic and commercial ties.

Statements by Members

[Translation]

GRAND DÉFI PIERRE LAVOIE

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last year, our Conservative government promised to support the Grand défi Pierre Lavoie to the tune of \$1 million over two years.

Although the Grand défi Pierre Lavoie organizes activities throughout the school year, the 1,000-km event that is part of the adult component of the défi will be held this weekend.

This Friday, May 12, nearly 1,000 cyclists will join this cycling marathon, pedalling behind Pierre Lavoie from Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean to Montreal.

This sporting event is a forum to raise awareness among the community of the importance of changing our lifestyle habits to ensure our children's future.

All proceeds from the event go to the Grand défi Pierre Lavoie Foundation to support medical research on orphan diseases and to fund projects that promote healthy life habits.

Congratulations to Pierre Lavoie, who, since 2008, has captured our hearts and those of our children by pedalling for a good cause.

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CANADIAN ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ACT

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be introducing a bill this week to amend the Canadian Environmental Protection Act to prohibit interprovincial movements of hazardous wastes.

This bill was designed by Mr. Rob Williams' French immersion students at Citadel High School as part of the Create Your Canada project.

After learning about the legislative process and government jurisdictions, the students identified some problems within our community. Many ideas were put forward, such as creating a scholarship program for studying French and promoting local food. Students then suggested a bill to encourage the provinces to find innovative solutions to reduce the quantity of waste produced.

I congratulate all the students who helped create this bill. I am proud to introduce this bill and represent these young people who care about the environment.

● (1415)

[English]

Way to go, Citadel High.

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HOUSING

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada held its annual rally on the Hill. During this time, members of the federation were grateful for our government's sound investments. They said that they looked forward to continuing to work with us on finding ways to improve housing options for Canadians.

Our government is committed to building on our record. In 2013, our government changed the rules to allow refinancing for housing providers that required capital repairs and renovations to extend the life of their housing. Just last year, we announced a common sense approach that gave many co-ops greater flexibility when their CMHC operating agreements reached their maturation.

Co-ops can now retain any money they have in their subsidy surplus fund to lower the cost of housing for low-income households.

On this side of the House, we are ensuring that these changes are saving Canadians money and are helping to lower the cost of housing, while at the same time creating jobs in the process.

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ACTIVIST FOR THE HUMBER RIVER

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I rise to recognize and show my support for Madeleine McDowell, a lifelong activist for the Humber River in my riding of Parkdale—High Park, in Toronto. Working as a conservationist and historian, Ms. McDowell was a leading force in the campaign to have the Humber recognized as a Canadian heritage river.

This past Sunday, on Canadian Rivers Day, I joined Madeleine and members of the community to celebrate the 15th anniversary of the Humber's heritage designation. Madeleine has worked tirelessly to protect the Humber and keep its rich history alive. The only heritage river that is accessible by foot, bike, car, and subway, the Humber is a cherished part of Toronto's urban ecosystem.

We are truly fortunate to have Madeleine as a community leader and advocate for Canada's natural heritage. On behalf of my whole community, we thank Madeleine McDowell.

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WORLD ELDER ABUSE AWARENESS DAY

Mr. Dan Albas (Okanagan—Coquihalla, CPC): Mr. Speaker, June 15 marks World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. Elder abuse is a serious issue to Canadians, and our government is taking action.

Last January, we introduced the Protecting Canada's Seniors Act to ensure tougher penalties for those who take advantage of elderly Canadians. We also recently introduced the Canadian victims bill of rights, which would give seniors dignity and respect by the legal system that they depend on to defend them. This April, our government tabled the digital privacy act, which would better protect seniors from fraud and financial abuse.

I ask that all Canadians stand with this government in recognizing World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, on June 15. Together we can make a difference.

*Oral Questions***SHOOTINGS IN MONCTON**

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday thousands of residents of southeastern New Brunswick, and police officers from across the country honoured the ultimate sacrifice made by RCMP Constables Fabrice Gevaudan, Dave Ross, and Douglas Larche in the line of duty. We also prayed for the recovery of the two other brave officers, Constables Darlene Goguen and Eric Dubois, injured in the same horrendous act of violence.

[Translation]

The Greater Moncton community, normally peaceful and always full of compassion, has been through some painful times. The pain that residents are feeling represents just a fraction of the grief and sadness felt by the families, including the young children, of our three heroes.

[English]

Tragic moments often reveal the hidden strength of a community. We were blessed by the strong leadership of Moncton's Mayor George LeBlanc and RCMP Superintendent Marlene Snowman. Their words inspired all of us to endure in the face of terrible evil and to begin the road to healing.

I know that all members join me in expressing our sympathies to the families of these brave RCMP officers. May they rest in peace.

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SHOOTING IN VANCOUVER

Hon. Ron Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday there was another senseless shooting, this time in Vancouver. Shots rang out in a midday gun battle in busy Yaletown, steps from the False Creek seawall. I am pleased to see that the victim, an innocent bystander and pillar of the community, is now in stable condition, and that the police officer who was injured while defending the people of Vancouver has been released from the hospital.

Our government is committed to keeping our streets and communities safe by ensuring that those people who engage in evil and depraved actions will be put behind bars where they belong, and where they cannot harm innocent Canadians who are going about their daily lives. I look forward to the individual responsible for this crime facing the full force of the justice system.

* * *

• (1420)

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Dan Harris (Scarborough Southwest, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, in response to questions about whether the Conservatives' latest bill is unconstitutional, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration decided that the best thing to do was to evade the question and instead launch a personal attack on the lawyer challenging the bill.

Then, last night on CBC, the minister was asked what he thought about revoking the citizenship of Canadian-born citizens. How did he respond? He said that the host should stop frightening people. It is as though the minister now understands that actually reading his bill will make people fear it. The minister does not have a leg to stand on

when it comes to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and the Canadian Bar Association has said that this bill imposes “exile as an additional form of punishment”.

After countless bills overturned, a Supreme Court pick rejected, and the government's unilateral Senate position stopped, Canadians deserve better than a bungling immigration minister misleading Canadians and ramming through unconstitutional bills. In 2015, by voting NDP, they will get it.

* * *

ELEANOR MILNE

Ms. Lois Brown (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in St. Paul's Cathedral, in London, England, is found the tomb of the great architect Sir Christopher Wren.

The words carved on his stone are:

Reader, if you seek his monument, look around you.

Let us look around this building at the 14 great windows of this chamber bearing the floral emblems of the provinces, at the great frieze sculpture above the foyer that tells the story of Canada, and at the many other carved artworks created by Canada's first Dominion Sculptor, Eleanor Milne.

From 1962 to 1993, she altered the very fabric of this building using a mallet, a chisel, and a brilliant artistic mind.

She and her team worked from 11 at night until 6 in the morning. The frieze outside this chamber, the “History of Canada Series”, took 12 years to complete.

Her book, *Captured in Stone: Carving Canada's Past* is dedicated to “all who come to visit the Centre Block, Canada's Parliament Buildings”.

Miss Milne died on May 17 at the age of 89. If you seek her monument, look around you.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

EMPLOYMENT

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today we finally learned why the minister of employment has been trolling Internet job sites like Kijiji instead of using real labour market statistics. He has cut the budget for job market research by 20%, at a time when there are 1.3 million Canadians unemployed, 300,000 more than when the recession hit.

How can the Prime Minister possibly justify cutting a service that actually helps Canadians to find jobs?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, I understand that is not correct. The minister has diverted resources from some areas into the labour market area and will be doing so further. However, that should not obscure the outstanding job creation record of Canada. We have had 1.1 million net new jobs created since the recession. That is obviously one of the best records in the world. We continue to look for ways to increase that even farther.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a million new jobs. It sounds like the Prime Minister is taking math lessons from Tim Hudak.

[*Translation*]

How can the Prime Minister justify that his government—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition has the floor.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: Mr. Speaker, how can the Prime Minister justify that even as his government is trying to take over job training programs—up to now a provincial responsibility—he is eliminating the information service for these programs, which we need?

Now that he has eliminated the programs in question, is he serious about using Kijiji as a way to obtain information?

• (1425)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I just said, it is quite the contrary. What the NDP leader said is not accurate.

[*English*]

The numbers I am citing on job creation actually come from Statistics Canada. I would urge the leader of the NDP to look at those. He will find that over 80% of these jobs are full time and in the private sector; nearly two-thirds of them are high wage.

While he is at it, he would be best to educate himself and learn that we cannot create jobs through opposing trade, opposing development, and hiking taxes, as the NDP—

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

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): I must have hit a soft spot, Mr. Speaker.

The Liberals and Conservatives have watched a generation of good middle-class jobs disappear, and they have done nothing to create the next generation of full-time, well-paid jobs. There are 300,000 more people unemployed today than before the recession. What do they do? They cut job market research. They kill tax breaks for small businesses, the real job creators in our country.

Can the Prime Minister tell us why he is killing the small business hiring credit that helps create jobs?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is interesting. This is a time-limited credit that the NDP voted against, not once, but on several occasions.

We have lowered taxes for businesses of all size in this country. We refuse to bring in not only the job-killing carbon tax, but the 60% hike on EI premiums that the NDP wants to bring in to pay for the

45-day work year. That is why there is not a single small business organization in this country that is ever going to support the NDP.

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PUBLIC WORKS AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in the words of one of Canada's top defence journalists, David Pugliese, "It appears to be total confusion on the F-35 front in Ottawa these days", yet the Prime Minister still seems poised to blindly push ahead with the expensive and risky single-engine F-35.

I have a straightforward question for the Prime Minister. Will other companies be allowed to submit bids on the contract to replace Canada's aging F-18s before any decision is made on the F-35?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as we have said, the process for procuring the next generation of fighter aircraft has been going through a multi-step process, including an extensive independent evaluation of the options by experts in the field. That report has just been received by us. It has not yet been reviewed by cabinet, but I assure the hon. member that when we look at it, we will always consider what is in the best long-term interests of the men and women of the Royal Canadian Air Force.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, apparently the Prime Minister does not understand that in an open, competitive bidding process one allows the bids before announcing the decision, so that the process works.

[*Translation*]

Two years ago, the Auditor General reviewed the Conservatives' plan to purchase F-35s and found that the process was a complete mess. We knew that already. The Prime Minister was forced to retreat and dismiss his incompetent minister.

Two years later, he is about to make the same mistakes because he still has not launched an open and transparent bidding process, and this time he cannot blame his incompetent minister.

How much longer do the Canadian Forces have to wait?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government commissioned a panel of independent experts to look at all of the options for replacing our fighter jets.

Cabinet is going to examine that report, and it will determine which option is the best for our air force.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

The one thing I know for sure is that whatever decision the government takes it will be opposed by the NDP because the NDP always opposes acquisitions of equipment for the men and women in uniform. It is the no-defence party over there, the NDP. Ours is the party that stands for the men and women in uniform.

● (1430)

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in December 2012 the Chief of the Defence Staff told the defence committee that the F-35 was not the only plane that met Canada's stealth requirements and that "all options are on the table" to replace our fighters. Therefore, will the Prime Minister commit that the government will only replace our CF-18s through an open, transparent, competitive bidding process?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government has indeed commissioned a panel of independent experts to look at all the available options and also the appropriate process for that. We have just received the report, and I can assure the hon. member that the government will act on the recommendations of experts and always do what is right for the men and women of the Royal Canadian Air Force.

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THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the northern gateway pipeline project has failed in its duty to consult with first nations. It has failed to reassure Canadians that the Great Bear rainforest will be protected. It has failed to show those whose jobs and livelihood depend on the Pacific Ocean that a catastrophic spill can be prevented. Therefore, will the Government of Canada do the right thing and say no to the northern gateway pipeline?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I understand the ideological opposition of the Liberal Party to the energy industry, which of course goes back to the days of his father. The reality is there has been a joint review process, a rigorous process, undertaken in terms of environmental assessment. The government has received that report. The government is in the process of examining it and the government will act on the recommendations of experts.

[Translation]

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this government did not act with due diligence when it comes to the northern gateway pipeline project. Environmental considerations were not adequately assessed and the aboriginal communities that will be affected by the project were not adequately consulted.

Will the Prime Minister say no to this mismanaged pipeline project?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Party took that position before even seeing the final recommendations made by the panel of experts who worked on this matter for several months. The panel gave us a report containing recommendations and we are going to consider them before taking action.

*[English]***NATIONAL DEFENCE**

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, former Liberal defence ministers Bill Graham and David Pratt are calling on Canada to participate in the U.S. missile defence scheme. It was a bad idea in 2005 and it is a bad idea today.

Will the Prime Minister be very clear that he will not drag Canada into the U.S. system for ballistic missile defence?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what I will be very clear on is that this government will always take the appropriate course of action to protect the security of Canadians.

A decision, which was supported by our party some years ago, was made not to participate in that system, given the risks that existed at the time. Those risks have continued to evolve.

The government will continue to examine the facts and will make any decision necessary to protect the security of Canadians.

[Translation]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, is the Prime Minister serious? Does he really want Canada to participate in the American missile defence system? Is that his peace plan, an arms race?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know that the NDP takes an ideological position against defending Canada. However, protecting Canadians at all times has always been one of the responsibilities of Conservative and Liberal governments.

A decision was made a decade ago. The government will continue to examine the situation before it determines a course of action.

* * *

● (1435)

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Jonathan Genest-Jourdain (Manicouagan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today, thousands of Canadians and first nations members are joining the Our Dreams Matter Too walk, calling for better education and health care for first nations children.

This walk is being held as the Conservative government is gearing up to eliminate on-reserve early childhood intervention programs, effective July 1.

This decision, which is pushing families to leave their community to get services, is currently before the Human Rights Tribunal.

Why is the minister targeting the most vulnerable children?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, protecting children living on reserve is a priority for our government. That is why, since 2006, we have used a prevention-based approach to delivering family and child services.

Oral Questions

To protect these children, we have increased funding for the family violence prevention program by 38% and we have passed the Family Homes on Reserves and Matrimonial Interests or Rights Act.

In fact, since 2006, our government has invested more than \$10 billion to support the primary and secondary education of roughly 117,500 first nations children on reserve. The NDP voted against those measures in every budget.

[*English*]

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today marks another anniversary of the residential school apology. Back then the government promised that things would be different and that relationships would be improved, but aboriginal children are not seeing these promised changes.

On July 1, the Conservative government will be cutting early childhood intervention programs, and no replacement will be provided. Government should be investing in aboriginal children, not clawing back badly needed services.

Why is the minister cutting funding from some of our country's most vulnerable children?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first of all, the funds are not being cut. It is a falsehood.

Protecting children on reserve is a priority for our government. We believe that the best way to ensure first nations children and families get the support they need is by working with willing partners, including first nations, provinces, and territories, which deliver child and family services. This is what we are doing and will keep on doing.

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CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration took evasive action after being asked about the constitutionality of his immigration bill. He refused to answer the question, but he did manage to make an unrelated reference to the “disgraced ideological former lawyer of the Khadr family”.

Could the minister tell us how his latest smear job is even remotely relevant to the constitutionality of Bill C-24?

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what is clear is that we were given a strong mandate as a government to reinforce the value of Canadian citizenship, and citizenship is based on allegiance.

Liberals had 13 years to try to sort these issues with backlogs. New Democrats have not had the chance, and if all goes well, they will never have it, but Canadians think it is absolutely legitimate for dual nationals who have committed acts of treason, of terrorism, of espionage to forfeit their Canadian citizenship.

That is a violation of—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Davenport.

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what is clear is that this bill proposes new powers to deport a Canadian-born

citizen to a country to which they have no connection. This is nonsensical, and it is most likely unconstitutional.

The hon. member knows there is a public outcry and he knows people are asking to compromise, yet he stubbornly steams ahead, ignoring all criticism.

Why did the government turn down every single suggestion put forward to try to fix this bill?

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what is clear is that the member opposite is lost in the thicket of his own ideology. There is absolutely no new provision in this bill to deport or to strip the citizenship of Canadian citizens who have only one nationality.

It is offensive for the members opposite to be drawing a false distinction between who are naturalized Canadians and those who are Canadian born. The law applies to them equally, and we will continue to take our advice from lawyers who know the difference between a removal and a revocation, which the lawyer he mentioned clearly does not.

• (1440)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister no longer knows what to say to salvage his credibility.

A number of experts, including the Canadian Bar Association, believe that the citizenship bill is unconstitutional. Yesterday, in a CBC interview, the minister dismissed the criticism, saying that Bill C-24 is similar to what is being done in other NATO countries, but what does NATO have to do with a debate on access to Canadian citizenship? It is completely ridiculous.

Will our fundamental rights in Canada now depend on the mood of our NATO allies?

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what does NATO have to do with this debate? Our allies and partners think it is important to show allegiance to their system of law and their country.

Canadians also think that is important. That is why we have a citizenship bill that will strengthen the value of citizenship and protect us from terrorists, traitors and spies.

It is high time that the NDP realized that these people exist, that they pose a threat and that we have to take action to deal with those threats.

Oral Questions

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a few weeks ago, the minister had to apologize to an immigration consultant whose name he unfairly dragged through the mud. The minister also attacked the Canadian Bar Association for its position on Bill C-24, and yesterday, he went after Toronto constitutional expert Rocco Galati, who was another victim of the minister's mood swings.

Why is the minister ignoring or attacking everyone who does not agree with him? Does he not realize that this attitude, which is typical of the Conservatives, is completely ridiculous and inappropriate?

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the real question is how the NDP can justify defending terrorism, treason and espionage as a cornerstone of our citizenship. How can the NDP say that these people should keep their citizenship, even if they are dual citizens? We will not accept that.

Canadians have been clear in this regard, and we do not think that the few lawyers who expressed an opinion on behalf of the Canadian Bar Association speak for the lawyers of this country. Most Canadians agree that we must protect the value of Canadian citizenship and allegiance to the crown and this country.

* * *

JUSTICE

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I do not know what planet he is living on.

The Conservatives' unilateral reform of the Senate was deemed to be unconstitutional. A number of aspects of their law and order agenda have been struck down by the Supreme Court. The same is true of their initial securities commission plan.

Despite these setbacks, the Conservatives stubbornly continue to introduce flawed bills. Many aspects of the unfair elections act are unconstitutional. The same goes for their immigration reform, which will certainly end up before the courts.

When will the Conservatives start drafting bills that comply with the Constitution?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, on each occasion we introduced bills that complied with the Constitution. That is absolutely necessary. A section at the Department of Justice examines every bill before it is introduced in the House of Commons. I encourage my dear colleague to take the time to read the bills before rising in the House of Commons to share misinformation.

* * *

[English]

EMPLOYMENT

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while perhaps not the most heinous action by the Conservatives, the cancellation of the long form census was arguably the stupidest, depriving Canadians of a true understanding of our country.

Now they are at it again, slashing spending on labour market data at a time when they used alleged labour market shortages to justify a mushrooming increase in foreign workers. Did they deliberately bury the data to hide the fact that they were hiring foreigners when Canadians were able and willing to do the work?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the question is false and ridiculous. In fact, a couple of non-labour-market-information related time-limited surveys ran their course, but I am pleased that the member raised the question, because it allows me to inform the House that the government will be launching two significant, robust, new labour market information studies, one a quarterly study on job vacancies and one a robust annual survey on wage rates, just as experts have asked us to do.

We are delivering. We will be getting that labour market information. Unlike the Liberals, who set up the low-skilled temporary foreign worker program in 2002, we are going to tighten up this program and ensure that Canadians always come first.

* * *

● (1445)

NATURAL RESOURCES

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since getting U.S. approval for Keystone XL is important for our economy, why have the Conservatives so badly bungled this file? The Prime Minister thought that he could bully President Obama into submission. How did that work out? They have destroyed Canada's environmental reputation, and that has delayed the approval process.

When it comes to an important piece of energy infrastructure like the Keystone XL pipeline, why are the Conservatives so strategically stupid?

The Speaker: I do not know if that is fitting of the chamber. I do not know if the hon. parliamentary secretary wants to answer or not, but we will move on.

The hon. member for St. Paul's.

* * *

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are appalled to learn that the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration is threatening to unilaterally strip Canadian citizenship from people born here in Canada.

Criminals in Canada are punished according to our law. This arbitrary change to dual citizenship cuts to the absolute core of what it means to be Canadian. How can the minister justify this abuse of power that tramples on the rights of Canadians, even those born here in Canada?

Oral Questions

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this bill cuts to the absolute heart of the shortcomings of the 1977 Citizenship Act, brought in by Prime Minister Trudeau, which actually cheapened Canadian citizenship, opened it to abuse, and put to one side the whole question of allegiance and loyalty to this country.

The Liberals had 13 years to clean up this mess. They did nothing to stop citizenship of convenience. They did nothing to protect us from traitors.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, another diligent investigation by Ironworkers Local 720 has revealed yet another major violation in the temporary foreign worker program in Alberta's oil sands. This is the third case of an oil sands operation replacing 100 Canadian ironworkers with temporary foreign workers. What is equally reprehensible is that the investigations continue to be led by the ironworkers, not the government. When can these workers expect the minister to finally start investigating and punishing these blatant violations and actually protect Canadian jobs?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yet again, the premise of the question is entirely inaccurate. Of course, the member would complain if the minister himself was leading an investigation. It is our highly trained professional public servants at Service Canada and at Employment and Social Development Canada who are responsible for such investigations, who are conducting one in this respect, and I look forward to the results of their investigation.

Just as we have increased substantially investigations and audits of employers using the temporary foreign worker program, we will further tighten the program in the near future.

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, future changes are no consolation to Canadian workers who are losing jobs today. The minister's own department is continuing to approve labour market opinions that allow temporary foreign workers to replace Canadian workers, and they are doing so despite documented abuse in this sector.

The minister stands here and claims he will act, while his department continues to rubber-stamp requests. Will he finally call an independent review and fix the mess the Conservatives have created?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member is incorrect. In fact, the highly trained professional public servants of Service Canada do not approve labour market opinions for employers seeking temporary foreign workers if Canadians are or have been displaced by an employer. To do so would be against the law.

Of course, we have introduced independent audits at work sites, and we will be introducing a robust package of reforms in the near future to further ensure that this program is only and always used as a last and limited resort.

• (1450)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government's management of the temporary foreign worker program has been a catastrophe, and today we know why.

In order to approve labour market opinions, the minister must have information about the labour market. However, in their wave of blind budget cuts, the Conservatives have systematically reduced funding for labour market data collection. Last year the budget reduction was about 20%.

How can the minister justify these cuts?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member said that the program is a catastrophe. There are problems with it, but the number of temporary foreign workers entering Canada represented 1% of all workers seven years ago and it is still 1% of all workers today. It is not a huge change, and the effects are not catastrophic.

That said, we have increased audits and sentences for employers who abuse the program, and there will soon be substantial changes to strengthen the integrity of the program.

[*English*]

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is just more proof of gross mismanagement on the part of the Conservative government.

For years experts have been calling for better labour market statistics, which is crucial information that can help government craft the right policies. Instead the government cut funding for labour market information by 20% in just the past two years. It cut millions more from key Statistics Canada programs. No wonder the Conservatives are failing so badly at managing our labour market.

Why will the minister not stop this war on evidence and restore funding for labour market research?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again, the premise of the question is false. In fact, most of the surveys to which the member refers were not dealing with labour market information. They were time limited. They ran their course.

I am surprised to hear that NDP members do not read their favourite newspaper, the *Toronto Star*. If the member did, she would realize that the government is now launching two important, robust new labour market information surveys, one with respect to a quarterly survey on job vacancies and one an annual survey on wage rates.

Oral Questions

I am pleased to say that we have either implemented or are in the process of implementing about two-thirds of the recommendations of the Drummond commission and are working closely with the former labour market ministers to ensure better coordination of labour market information.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Oxford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday Canadians laid three heroes to rest. Thousands of police officers, members of the Canadian Armed Forces, and everyday Canadians joined together in Moncton to remember the lives lost last week at the hands of an evil individual bent on revenge. Our hearts were touched by the eulogies of families and friends who knew the three RCMP officers.

Can the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, who attended the regimental funeral, please update the House on this matter?

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a whole nation came together yesterday to mourn our three fallen heroes, RCMP Constables Larche, Gevaudan, and Ross.

[Translation]

Our thoughts and prayers are with the families of these young officers, who were taken in the prime of their lives.

[English]

We would like to express our gratitude to the law enforcement community and emergency response services for their remarkable conduct during those tragic hours as well as to the courageous people of Moncton who were so useful.

We will remember them.

* * *

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Hupacasath nation of British Columbia appeared in court yesterday to appeal a Federal Court decision concerning the investment deal with China.

It is distressing to see that the Conservatives are forcing our first nations to file an appeal to assert their rights. Instead, they should be taking those rights into consideration when negotiating international trade agreements. Why are the Conservatives not listening to first nations and Canadians? Why are they not acknowledging that they have signed a terrible agreement? Why not simply ditch this agreement with China?

[English]

Mr. Erin O'Toole (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the member well knows, the FIPA with China will give a lot of Canadian exporters and companies many of the same protections that Chinese operators in Canada already have. It is about evening and levelling the playing

field, helping one in five jobs attributable to trade continue. As for the court case, we will not comment on that at this time.

• (1455)

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Canada-China FIPA was rammed through Parliament a year and a half ago, and at that time, the Conservatives made a big deal out of a bad deal, but mysteriously, the Conservatives have never ratified the treaty, and the minister will not explain why. This secrecy and confusion is damaging Canada-China relations.

Have the Conservatives failed to ratify the deal because it was sloppily negotiated, because they failed to consult first nations, because they are getting sued, or was it all of the above?

Mr. Erin O'Toole (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from the trade committee for that multiple-choice test he is seeming to give. The real answer is what trade deal has the NDP stood in the House to support? The answer to that question is none of the above. We are here to grow jobs for Canadians, including import and exports to China, and we look forward to a decision. The courts are moving forward on this agreement.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is no way to make the northern gateway pipeline project safe. Shipping raw bitumen through the pristine waters off B.C.'s coast means a spill would be catastrophic. We all know, and even Enbridge admits, that spills happen.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources claims projects will only proceed if they are safe. Well, this project is not safe. First nations know it, experts know it, British Columbians know it, so will the minister abide by her promise and just reject this grotesque proposal?

Mrs. Kelly Block (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have been clear. Projects will only proceed if they are safe for Canadians and safe for the environment. We are proud of the action we have taken to ensure that Canada has a world-class regulatory framework and a means for the safest form of transportation for our energy projects. Our government is currently reviewing the independent joint review panel report and will make a decision in due course.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, from the Prime Minister's own hand-picked adviser, to Jim Prentice, to B.C. first nation leaders, all have warned the government that if it tries to ram through the Enbridge northern gateway project against the wishes of B.C. first nations, not only will it ensure that this bad pipeline never gets built, but it also puts at risk many other industrial development projects across B.C.

Oral Questions

Their arrogance is threatening the B.C. economy. Are all 21 British Columbia Conservative MPs going to sit on their hands while the belligerence of the government threatens B.C.'s economy? Whatever happened to standing up for Canada? When are you going to stand up for British Columbia?

The Speaker: The member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley knows to direct his comment through the Chair and not directly at his colleagues.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources.

Mrs. Kelly Block (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said, there is a process that is currently under way. The joint panel has provided the government with its report, and we are carefully considering it prior to making any decisions on this project. Once again, projects will only proceed if they are safe for Canadians and safe for the environment.

* * *

[Translation]

PRIVACY

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, clause 28 of the Conservatives' omnibus bill is designed to allow any public servant at the Canada Revenue Agency to share personal and confidential information with any police service, without taxpayers' consent. That infringes on the right to liberty and will lead to unreasonable searches.

The Supreme Court has already said that Canadians must not lose confidence in the tax system and that its credibility should not be undermined. Why, then, are the Conservatives putting Canadians at risk?

[English]

Hon. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay (Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, those statements are simply false. When CRA officials uncover evidence of serious criminal activity in the course of their ordinary duties, they will be able to share that with law enforcement agencies. That is a reasonable expectation that all Canadians would have.

There have been occasions when CRA officials have uncovered evidence of drug trafficking, terrorism, child pornography, and even contracts for the commission of murder, and have been restricted from conveying that information. Contrary to these claims, police forces will not be able to direct CRA officials to search for specific information. Quite frankly, I find the statements of the member opposite extraordinary.

* * *

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the so-called fair elections act needs amending. Yesterday Liberal supporters from across Ontario received letters from the Ontario Conservatives reminding them to vote, but at the wrong polling stations. One of these letters was even signed by the assistant of the Conservative MP for London North Centre.

The letters from the Conservatives' Ontario cousins suppressed votes, just like Conservative data were used to suppress votes in the 2011 federal election. Will the Conservatives give the elections commissioner the powers he needs to protect Canadians?

• (1500)

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, of course nothing could be further from the truth. As members know, Elections Canada investigated the false allegations by both opposition parties that they made over the last couple of years and found, of course, as we have been saying all along, that we ran a clean and ethical campaign.

The fact of the matter is that we were returned to government with a majority because we cut taxes for people, we invested in the economy, and we have had over a million net new jobs created in this country. It is because we provide a good government that Canadians rewarded us with another mandate, and that is why they will do it again after 2015.

* * *

[Translation]

JUSTICE

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights rejected an NDP amendment to Bill C-13 that would have made discrimination on the basis of gender identity a hate crime. It just so happens that right before the vote, the member for Kootenay—Columbia, who supported the amendment, was replaced by the member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex. Why did the Prime Minister's Office intervene to block this important amendment?

[English]

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as Minister of Justice, I certainly do not interfere with the committee process. What I do know is the member for Kootenay—Columbia, a former member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, took the time to leave the committee to pay respects to his fallen comrades in the RCMP and to watch the service that was being broadcast live from Moncton. I am sure the member opposite and all members can understand this, and empathize with a former RCMP officer who would want to, in that moment, be spiritually with his fallen comrades.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the fact remains that at the last minute, Conservative votes were swapped or changed in order to block an amendment to Bill C-13 that would have protected those most subject to hate crimes in Canada. This was an amendment that the Minister of Justice said in committee that he supported in principle.

Oral Questions

Instead, Conservatives voted to deny equal protection against hate crimes to transgendered and gender-variant Canadians, even though this very same protection has already passed the House of Commons twice, only to be blocked in the Senate. What do Conservatives have against standing up for vulnerable Canadians?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have just explained and I am surprised that the member opposite would again leave some aspersions hanging over the individual.

However, with respect to the substance of this issue, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal has already, along with several of its provincial counterparts, recognized that discrimination on the basis of transsexualism is a form of sex discrimination. Additionally, under the Criminal Code as well there is a non-exhaustive list of provisions for aggravating factors that are used to increase sentences. It is not necessary to amend the legislation, as sufficient protection already exists.

* * *

INDUSTRY

Ms. Joyce Bateman (Winnipeg South Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government recently announced the renewal of the computers for schools program, an initiative that has provided tremendous opportunities for Canadian youth for over 20 years. This program takes and refurbishes computers that are otherwise destined for a landfill, and provides hundreds of thousands of young people in schools, public libraries, and aboriginal communities with access to a digital world.

Could the minister please explain why our government has renewed this program, and how it fits with Canada's digital framework, DC150?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as part of our Digital Canada 150 policy, we want to make sure that all Canadians have access to all the economic and educational opportunities of the digital age.

The computers for schools program refurbishes 280,000 computers and gives them to schools all across the country, but also does better than that. We hire 1,000 students to refurbish the computers, and we put them into schools. We also put them into communities that do not have access to this kind of technology.

We also partner with organizations like the Neil Squire Society, which helps Canadians with physical disabilities have access to the basic technologies so they can fully participate in Canadian society.

It is a small investment with a great consequence that will help connect Canadians for the future.

* * *

• (1505)

HUMAN RIGHTS

Ms. Chrystia Freeland (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this month Toronto will have the honour of hosting the WorldPride celebration. This is an essential moment for us all to assert that LGBT rights are human rights, and to establish Canada both as a world leader and a global haven on this crucial issue.

My constituents understandably expect their Prime Minister to take part. Could the Prime Minister please tell the House which of the many Pride events he will be attending?

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are very proud of the fact that the summer season is upon us. Across Canada, people will be celebrating. It is a great time for tourists to come to Canada. I know the Pride festival in Toronto brings a lot of people to the city of Toronto.

Toronto, of course, is an incredible destination for people to come and visit. We are very proud of the city of Toronto. As somebody from just north of Toronto, I am excited to invite people to my community, to Markham, to Stouffville, and to the York region. We have a lot to offer people from across Canada and from around the world.

I hope to see the hon. member in all of the amazing tourist destinations, and not only across Toronto but across the country.

* * *

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Social Security Tribunal just slapped the government in the face by saying that it exceeded its authority when it claimed tens of thousands of dollars from 100 employees of a seafood plant.

The Employment Insurance Commission knew about the agreement and had agreed to pay benefits, but instead of listening to the findings of the tribunal that it created itself, the government is refusing to listen to reason and is appealing the case.

Can the minister explain why he is going after honest workers?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is the result of a serious investigation into potentially misleading statements that cost taxpayers hundreds of thousands of dollars.

In this case, nearly \$1 million in employment insurance benefits were paid out to people who were not truly unemployed. When this is discovered, the individuals whose claims are denied can appeal to the Social Security Tribunal, an independent quasi-judicial tribunal.

It is unfair to Canadian taxpayers, who work hard and pay into EI, if we do nothing to recover money paid out to people who were not entitled to it.

* * *

[English]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Wetaskiwin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians know the importance of our natural resources in providing jobs and economic prosperity. Canada is a secure and responsible supplier of energy and is well-positioned to contribute to global energy security, whether it be by utilizing our robust infrastructure or by deploying our world-class energy expertise and know-how.

Oral Questions

Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources update this House on what our government is doing to reinforce Canada's commitment to global energy security?

Mrs. Kelly Block (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for the very good work he does on the natural resources committee.

Our government is committed to collaborating with our allies to support regional and global energy stability. That is why the minister is in New York City today to participate in the Goldman Sachs North American Energy Summit. He will participate in discussions with his North American counterparts and highlight Canada's commitment to global energy security.

* * *

[Translation]

QUEBEC BRIDGE

Mr. Denis Blanchette (Louis-Hébert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last year CN produced a report about the condition of the Quebec Bridge. Even though this is a public safety issue, the CN report was released only to shareholders. The most recent public report was released in 2011.

Did the Minister of Transport have access to the CN report? If so, when will she make it public? If not, how can she claim that the bridge is safe?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in this country we have rules that we expect railways to follow. They are very clearly set out in the Railway Safety Act. We also expect that they will conduct investigations on their property to ensure that there are not any accidents.

When we say that we have inspected the rail, it matters as well too. Indeed, that is what we did with respect to this rail to ensure that it was safe.

As the hon. member does know, CN and the Government of Canada are currently in a dispute with respect to the payment of monies for the further painting of that bridge. As it is before the courts, I have no further comment.

* * *

• (1510)

[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Conservatives said that federal penitentiaries have the tools to prevent helicopter-assisted escapes. That is true. What they did not say is that Quebec prisons do not have the same tools. That is entirely the Conservatives' fault.

I have a letter dated October 24, 2013, in which the Quebec minister asks Ottawa to regulate airspace over Quebec prisons. Because the government ignored Quebec's request, three dangerous criminals escaped from prison and are now on the run.

How could the Minister of Transport ignore the letter from the Government of Quebec and its request?

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to reassure my colleague. We all know that three criminals are on the loose. We are supporting the Government of Quebec's efforts to catch these dangerous individuals. If the member or anyone else has information, they can contact Canadian or Quebec authorities.

* * *

[English]

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: That concludes question period for today.

I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of a parliamentary delegation led by the Honourable Chi Wanchun, Chair of the China-Canada Legislative Association of the National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-François Fortin: Mr. Speaker, I seek the unanimous consent of the House to move the following motion: Given the National Assembly of Quebec's passage of Bill 52, the end-of-life care act, that this House reaffirm Quebec's exclusive right to legislate on health matters, including end-of-life care.

[English]

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.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, if you seek it, I believe you would find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move that the House request that (a) unless discussing matters relating to security, employment staff relations, or a tender, or if unanimous consent of all board members present is obtained, all meetings of the Board of Internal Economy be held henceforth in a transparent manner open to the public; (b) all board proceedings be henceforth recorded and verbatim publications of the proceedings be made publicly available; (c) all reports of studies ordered henceforth by the board be made publicly available; and (d) proceedings of the board to be held in camera, as well as reports of studies ordered by the board to be kept confidential, only take place after a publicly held discussion of the board explaining the necessity of the confidentiality.

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.

*Routine Proceedings***ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS***[English]***GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS**

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 95 petitions.

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INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union respecting its participation at the 130th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union and Related Meetings, held in Geneva, Switzerland, from March 16 to 20, 2014.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle (Rivière-du-Nord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I am tabling the report of the Canadian delegation of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie respecting its participation at the meeting of the APF Cooperation and Development Committee, held in Quebec City from March 18 to 20, 2013.

* * *

*[English]***COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 16th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, requesting an extension to a later date to consider Motion No. 431, election of committee chairs. If the House gives its consent, I intend to move concurrence in the 16th report later today.

● (1515)

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have two reports to table today.

I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the seventh report of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources, entitled "Cross-Canada Benefits of the Oil and Gas Industry". Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government make a comprehensive response to this report.

I also have the honour to present, in both official languages, the eighth report of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources in relation to Bill C-22, an act respecting Canada's offshore oil and gas operations, enacting the Nuclear Liability and Compensation Act, repealing the Nuclear Liability Act and making consequential amendments to other acts. The committee has studied the bill and has decided to report the bill back to the House with amendments.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour of presenting the dissenting opinion of the official opposition to the report by the Standing Committee on

Natural Resources, on cross-Canada benefits of developing the oil and gas industry of the energy sector.

New Democrats recognize the importance and major contribution of the oil and gas sector to Canada's economy. However, as Canada's official opposition, we favour an approach to parliamentary committee studies that offers objective and balanced analyses, contributing to sound resource management.

We are appreciative of all of the witnesses who took the time to share their perspective and expertise. The majority report provides a reasonable summary of the testimony. Regrettably, the testimony was constrained by the limited scope of the study as proposed by the government, which prevented a net benefit assessment of the oil and gas sector. Few witnesses were invited to testify on current or potential risks, or costs associated with the sector. Consequently, the majority report fails to provide meaningful or balanced direction for public policy.

The government has espoused that responsible resource development requires balanced consideration of both economic development and environmental protection, as well as enhanced consultations with aboriginal peoples, yet, by design, this study was limited to a narrow review of economic benefits of the sector. Inclusion of testimony by a broader range of witnesses on associated risks or challenges faced by communities, aboriginal peoples, and workers could have offered more credible and constructive advice for sound and balanced federal policy. We were denied the opportunity of even posing questions to witnesses on these broader challenges.

In the 21st century economy, a progressive, realistic, and responsible policy must also factor in the true costs of resource exploitation and apply a policy framework addressing those challenges to ensure sustainability.

Hon. Geoff Regan: Mr. Speaker, on the same report, I wish to present the dissenting report of the Liberal Party in relation to the seventh report of the Committee on Natural Resources.

The Speaker: The Standing Orders indicate that only the official opposition is able to speak to a dissenting report at the table.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION, PRIVACY AND ETHICS

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics, in relation to a certificate of nomination of Mary Elizabeth Dawson to the position of Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner.

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PARLIAMENT OF CANADA ACT

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-613, An Act to amend the Parliament of Canada Act and the Access to Information Act (transparency).

Routine Proceedings

He said: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Avalon for seconding my bill.

I am pleased today to introduce the transparency act. I genuinely look forward to working with all members of the House to further open up Parliament and government for the benefit of all Canadians.

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

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● (1520)

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the House gives its consent, I move that the 16th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs presented to the House earlier today be concurred in.

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

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: There is no consent.

[*Translation*]

FINANCE

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I move that the third report of the Standing Committee on Finance, presented on Tuesday, December 10, 2013, be concurred in.

I would like to share my time with my esteemed colleague, the member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques. Saying this riding's name is probably the most difficult thing about this speech.

The finance committee's study examines income inequality in Canada. This debate is vital, not only for poor Canadians, but for all Canadians because the effects of inequality are clear. The facts in this report show how bad it is for our economy.

[*English*]

I will touch on a number of aspects of income inequality that are raised in this incredibly important report.

As New Democrats, we support many of the general proposals and the breadth of this study that was first raised by my colleagues down the way. There were some other provisions that we would have sought in the study, some harder looks and closer examination of some of the aspects of inequality in Canada. However, all those watching and listening should rest assured that the impacts of inequality in Canada do not just affect those who are immediately targeted by low incomes and the effects of poverty; we know that those effects migrate out across the broader Canadian economy. It makes the country less healthy, less prosperous, less educated when we have serious inequality and when that inequality is growing.

From 1972 until just a couple of years ago, not only has the category of middle income Canadians shrunk in terms of the size of the Canadian population that can be classified as middle income, but

that group has also seen its real wages increase by a staggeringly low 0.2% over that whole time, when adjusted for inflation.

What does that mean? That means that people living and working in the early 1970s who were in the middle class have seen their wages grow in real dollar terms by only about 0.2%. It stayed virtually the same, but what has changed is the cost of living, as we all know, whether it is paying for energy to heat our homes and turn on the lights or paying for food whose costs have increased, and we have seen the cost of education increase. We have seen a steady downloading from the federal government to the provincial governments, on down to municipalities, and to the individuals. This has been steady and growing with the neo-Conservative policies that have been promoted by various Conservative and Liberal governments.

Over those 35 years—and this may strike Canadians as passing strange—virtually 93% of all the growth in disparity between the haves and the have-nots, between the wealthier and the less wealthy Canadians, grew while Liberals were in power. It is a confounding thing for many Canadians because most people do not watch the day-to-day machinations of government. That is understood. They do not tune into question period every afternoon or the work of committees. They do not study every single piece of legislation. People are busy trying to get the kids out to school, put food on the table, get a good job, and keep a good job.

Canadians who are not watching what happens when parties get into power will be confused by the fact that most inequality has grown while Liberals were in power, because most Canadians watch the campaigns. Most Canadians in particular watch the last couple of weeks of a campaign when the parties present themselves in their full force to Canadians.

The trend we have seen—and it is a worrisome and disappointing trend for my Liberal friends down the way—is that they campaign to the left and then tack right as soon as they get into government and introduce policies that are well supported by their Conservative allies across the way. Usually the only disagreement Conservatives have with Liberal taxation policies is that they are not draconian enough. They are not giving away enough in terms of tax treats to the wealthiest Canadians. That is the Conservative criticism of Liberal taxation policy.

This is connected to this conversation about inequality and this particular report from the finance committee, because we see the government's last budget. We saw one of the ministers commit to this just yesterday. In the way the Conservatives presented this budget, we wished the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance had taken a Hippocratic oath to do no harm when it comes to income inequality, because of what is in the pages of this budget. Members should get past the title; Conservatives are good at repeating titles ad nauseam. They put this spin on every bit of legislation around the budget: jobs, growth, and long-term prosperity. The question we should ask about that little spin job is: for whom and where?

● (1525)

Across the country we are seeing not only growing gaps in income between haves and have-nots but also disparity between the regions and the provinces, making the have and have-not provinces grow in distance from one another.

Routine Proceedings

One would wonder what the effect is, and we see it in this report from the committee. From the IMF to the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, all the way down from the most Conservative thinkers and think tanks in this country and around the world to the most progressive, there is one thing they agree on, which is that income inequality and regional disparity not only hurt impoverished individuals but also the broader economy. It has a dragging effect on the prosperity of the country as a whole.

One would think that if the economy were the number one issue for the Conservatives, as they claim, then income inequality would be one of the things that they would be focused on. That is why we wish they had taken a Hippocratic oath, because just recently we saw yet another confirmation of the Conservatives making a bad situation worse.

The specific policy that I would point to is the notion of income splitting. It would not help 86% of Canadians. It is the very policy that former finance minister Jim Flaherty, whom we all knew well and who was quite endeared to us, raised significant questions about. He raised questions about this idea because it would cost upward of \$5 billion to the federal and provincial coffers. That is not a small program.

What would people do with \$5 billion if they were trying to attack income inequality or help families? There is a whole slew of ideas, ideas that again come from the most progressive to the most conservative think tanks in this country.

The one idea that they say would not be great for income inequality and would not be great for helping families is income splitting, because it would help so few people and would disproportionately help those who need help the least, those making north of \$150,000 a year. Those families that have great disparity between what the spouses earn need to have a big gap between their earnings in order for them to achieve any benefit from income splitting. Single moms and single dads would receive no benefit from this measure whatsoever. People who have kids aged 18 and over would receive no benefit at all. People who do not have kids would not receive any benefit. It is almost as though the Conservatives are stuck in some sort of 1950s rerun. They can only imagine a family one way, so they designed the policy for that one family. They are confused and confounded when the experts come forward and say it is 2014, not 1950.

Because it is 2014, families in Canada come in every shape and size and in all kinds of forms, and if we want to help families, we need policies that would help them all, as opposed to helping just certain families.

The Broadbent Institute put a wonderful report out yesterday that confirmed the analysis from the C.D. Howe Institute, just in case anybody is worried about whether this message is coming from progressive thinkers or from conservative ones. The report breaks down the unfairness of the income-splitting program. More than half of the people who fit within that two-parent, two-kids scenario would not qualify for any benefit if both parents are in the same income bracket or if the disparity between their wages is not great enough. Who will benefit and receive the lion's share of the benefit from this income-splitting scheme, this \$5-billion program, would be

those who are the wealthiest. They stand to benefit upward of \$5,000 to \$6,000 per year with no strings attached.

One might question whether people making north of \$150,000, as members of Parliament do, need an extra \$5,000 in their pockets, as opposed to single moms struggling to make ends meet paying hydro bills or as opposed to parents in the same income bracket, both making \$45,000 an hour—excuse me, \$45,000 a year. The people making \$45,000 an hour are the folks the Conservatives are trying to help out. Those living in the real economy and trying to make ends meet would not get any help from this program at all. If they do somehow fit into that narrow 14% of middle-income and low-income Canadian families who might qualify, those families would get a couple of hundred dollars a year. The wealthiest families in Canada would get \$6,000, compared to a couple of hundred bucks for those with the lowest incomes.

Obviously the Conservatives have no interest in dealing with income inequality. I just wish they would do no harm, but instead, time and time again, we see proposals to shift the tax burden away from corporations. Since the Conservatives took power, taxes for corporations, the wealthiest in this country, have gone down by \$4.5 billion, but taxes on personal income have gone up by \$15 billion. Individuals are bearing the burden for all those goods and services that we want from government, while corporations are giving less. The rich are paying less while middle-income earners and the poorest Canadians are paying more.

• (1530)

That is the Conservative world view on taxes. That is the Conservative world view on the economy. Progressives, like New Democrats, believe in something different: true fairness for Canadian families and true fairness for Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, our finance critic, for his very good speech on this report.

I am on the Standing Committee on Finance, which studied the report. I think it is very relevant given that we discussed income splitting yesterday. During his speech, my colleague from Kings—Hants mentioned a number of times that he hoped all members in the House would be able to work together to tackle the problem of income inequality. However, based on what I saw in committee, that was not the case. I think that it may even be very difficult to have the same perception of the problem of income inequality.

I would like my friend to comment on one example. Although there were some recommendations where we could find common ground, we opposed one because it seemed to be irrelevant in a report on income inequality. It proposed that the federal government, within the parameters set by the Supreme Court of Canada, continue to work collaboratively with the provinces and territories in order to create a co-operative capital markets regulatory system to promote economic growth and better protect small investors.

How does such a measure directly address the issue of income inequality?

Routine Proceedings

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question. It is a very broad but also very technical question.

I have a problem with the targets, but let us look at the overall situation. Are the Conservatives or the Liberals interested in dealing with this problem? Yesterday evening, there was a very clear vote on an NDP motion to discuss the Conservatives' proposal to divide Canadian families into two categories, the rich and the poor. We do not think that is a good idea, given the inequality that already exists in Canada. The Conservatives voted against our motion or against the idea of equality, of a fair and equitable program.

In the end, the Liberals voted with us. That was a very good development. The content of the motion clearly shows that inequality has grown substantially during the 35 years of Liberal and Conservative leadership. It is really wonderful that the Liberals are finally admitting that the problem of inequality mainly stems from Liberal government policies. That is the reality. Yesterday evening's vote made that very clear.

[*English*]

I am glad that my Liberal colleagues came to the point of voting with the NDP motion last night, which said that the income-splitting scheme will increase inequality among Canadian families and that the haves will get more and the have-nots less. The motion also stated the central fact, which is that over the last 35 years, inequality has grown dramatically under successive Liberal and Conservative governments.

The proof of the pudding, for my Liberal friends in particular, will be to actually have policies that do something about it. It will be to have policies that reverse the inequality and the income gap and allow for the possibility of people prospering, which is the opportunity gap that we so often talk about.

That is something that needs to be real. We do not just need a vote on one night in the House of Commons; it needs to be real for all parties in this place if we truly want to stand up for Canadians.

• (1535)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate the topic at hand, especially since addressing poverty is one of the ways we have identified for helping Canadians.

The member spoke about income splitting. I have considered this situation. Clearly, there are major discrepancies between the people who will receive more money and those who will receive less.

Could an amendment be made so that the income tax refund would at least be issued to the member of the couple who earns less?

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, that is a very interesting question.

Perhaps there is a way to improve the program or reduce its negative effects. That could be a possibility, but I do not know. There are many other ideas out there now about how to help Canadian families. A little extra money could be added to help families who currently have a lot of difficulty just meeting their basic needs. That is a possibility.

The facts are not important to the Conservatives. They are always playing politics. That is often the problem with a government that does not like facts, particularly facts that go against its policies and promises. We will see. We certainly have a lot of ideas about how to help Canadian families.

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Skeena—Bulkley Valley and finance critic for his very interesting speech.

This debate is very relevant as it comes right after yesterday's debate on the opposition motion on income splitting. Unfortunately, the government overwhelmingly rejected the motion, despite the various opinions they heard and those we heard in the Standing Committee on Finance when we discussed this issue.

We had a number of debates following the motion moved by my colleague from Kings—Hants. However, he himself said he wanted to find common ground among the different parties. After the four meetings we had in committee, it was clear that we had a different vision of income inequality. When we do not have the same perception of the extent and origin of the problem, then it is rather difficult to find common solutions.

The opposition did its homework on this issue that affects all Canadians. This should not become a political issue; instead, it should be studied for the good of Canadians.

In committee, many witnesses, most of whom were invited by the Conservatives, denied the fact that income inequality constituted a structural problem, whether in terms of redistribution through the tax system or in terms of job opportunities. A number of those witnesses, who had been invited by the Conservative members of the committee, suggested that things were relatively normal and that this had more to do with an intergenerational inequality.

In other words, we expect young people to have much lower incomes than people with 25, 30, or 35 years in the workforce. A person in debt or with a very low income early on in their career can expect to move up the ladder and one day obtain a senior position.

That is true, but that is true in every society. That does not explain why income inequality, as measured by the Gini index or other factors that compare different deciles or quintiles of income, is much higher in Canada than in many other industrialized countries.

That troubles us and that is why we are having this debate. This inequality is a key concern of Canadians and Quebecers because it seems to be present in the structure of Canada's social fabric. It arose from the various measures that the various federal governments have adopted over the past few years.

Provincial governments may also share some responsibility, as a result of some of the decisions they have made. However, they are often not involved in decisions regarding transfers from the federal government, in particular social and health transfers.

Routine Proceedings

Health care costs can sometimes take up 40%, 45% or even 50% of a province's budget. These issues are therefore extremely important to them, and that explains why this inequality has increased in all of this country's provinces.

I mentioned that, in the beginning, members of the Standing Committee on Finance had different views on the issue of income inequality. This meant that we all had different views on what solutions were necessary.

The report contains some recommendations that the entire committee agreed upon, such as improvements to the employment assistance program, which helps low-income workers. We recognize that this is a progressive measure on the part of the Conservative government and that it helps the Canadians who need it most.

However, the Conservatives proposed other measures we do not think belong in a report on income inequality.

● (1540)

The measures could have an impact, but it would be so indirect and remote in this case that it would have little effect. At the end of the day, they would only promote and advance the Conservatives' agenda on certain issues.

In my question for the member to Skeena—Bulkley Valley I mentioned that the federal government was still working with the provinces and territories to create a single securities commission. This is an important economic issue. It comes up in debate quite often. The government is trying to reach an agreement with the provinces, and the Supreme Court has become involved. This is an important issue for financial markets and the business world in general, but it will have little effect on income inequality.

I think that we need to take a closer look at employment and education. The report has some good recommendations for education. All of the committee members agreed and voted in favour of these recommendations.

The same goes for several measures for the labour market that removed barriers preventing many Canadians from accessing well-paying jobs and fulfilling their career aspirations.

However, the report contains other elements that clearly demonstrate the differences between the Conservatives' approach and that of the NDP, the official opposition. Take, for example, the final recommendation concerning the federal government's strong commitment to keep taxes low and to not impose punishing, higher personal or business tax rates that would harm economic growth for all Canadians

Taxes can be kept as low as possible but, from a tax perspective, this debate is about far more than simply keeping taxes low. There are problems with fairness in the tax system. We did not address that at committee stage. There is nothing in the recommendations about the tax expenditures that currently total more than \$230 billion. That includes various tax credits and deductions that, at the end of the day, represent a loss for the Canadian treasury and that could be used to redistribute wealth. These programs need to be evaluated so we can see whether they are meeting their objectives.

Are all of these tax credits, whether for businesses or individuals—including targeted credits for arts or sports—adequately serving their function?

I think we need to evaluate that.

In our report, we recommended that the Canadian government implement a thorough review of Canada's tax and transfer system to determine which changes to the regime have resulted in the greatest increases in income inequality.

That means that we, on this side of the House, recognize that all of the changes that have been made to the tax system—and we can go as far back as the 1980s, to the reforms presented by the finance minister at the time, Michael Wilson—have contributed to a growing inequality. In fact, that is when we first saw an increase in poverty, which was exacerbated by the federal measures that were implemented to revamp social programs under the Liberal government in the mid-1990s.

Since then, many tax measures have only served to increase, not decrease, income inequality. In light of that, I think the issue merits further debate. Honestly though, I do not think that the Conservative government wants to debate it, which is why I would like to move the following motion, seconded by the hon. member for Vaudreuil-Soulanges:

That the debate be now adjourned.

● (1545)

[*English*]

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

● (1620)

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

(*Division No. 202*)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy
Albas
Alexander
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambrose
Anderson

Adler
Albrecht
Allen (Welland)
Ambler
Anders
Andrews

Routine Proceedings

Angus
Ashfield
Aspin
Aubin
Bélanger
Benoit
Bergen
Bezan
Blanchette-Lamothe
Block
Boughen
Braid
Brisson
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)
Byrne
Calkins
Carmichael
Carrie
Chicoine
Chisu
Choquette
Clarke
Comartin
Crockatt
Cullen
Daniel
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Day
Devolin
Dion
Donnelly
Dreeshen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Easter
Falk
Fast
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Freeland
Galipeau
Garrison
Genest-Jourdain
Gill
Godin
Goldring
Goodyear
Gourde
Groguhé
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hayes
Hillyer
Holder
Jacob
Jones
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kellway
Kerr
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lapointe
Laverdière
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
Leitch
Leslie
Lizon
Lukiwski
MacAulay
MacKenzie
Mai
Mathysen
Mayes
McColeman
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Menegakis
Michaud
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Murray
Nicholson
Nunez-Melo
O'Connor
Opitz

Armstrong
Ashton
Atamanenko
Bateman
Bennett
Benskin
Bernier
Blanchette
Blaney
Boivin
Boutin-Sweet
Breitkreuz
Brosseau
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Butt
Calandra
Cannan
Caron
Casey
Chisholm
Chong
Christopherson
Cleary
Côté
Crowder
Cuzner
Davidson
Davies (Vancouver East)
Dechert
Dewar
Dionne Labelle
Doré Lefebvre
Dubourg
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dykstra
Eyking
Fantino
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Fletcher
Freeman
Gallant
Genest
Giguère
Glover
Goguen
Goodale
Gosal
Grewal
Harper
Harris (St. John's East)
Hawn
Hiebert
Hoback
Hsu
James
Julian
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Komarnicki
Lamoureux
Lauzon
Lebel
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Lemieux
Leung
Lobb
Lunney
MacKay (Central Nova)
Maguire
Martin
May
McCallum
McGuinty
McLeod
Merrifield
Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Nicholls
Norlock
Obhrai
O'Neill Gordon
O'Toole

Papillon
Péclet
Preston
Raiit
Rankin
Regan
Rempel
Ritz
Saxton
Schellenberger
Seeback
Sgro
Shipley
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)
Sims (Newton—North Delta)
Sitsabaesan
Sopuck
St-Denis
Storseth
Sullivan
Thibeault
Toet
Trost
Trudeau
Turmel
Valcourt
Van Kesteren
Wallace
Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)
Wilks
Wong
Yelich
Young (Vancouver South)

Payne
Poilievre
Quach
Rajotte
Raynault
Reid
Richards
Saganash
Scarpaleggia
Scott
Sellah
Shea
Shory
Smith
Sorenson
Stewart
Strahl
Sweet
Tilson
Toone
Trotter
Truppe
Uppal
Valeriote
Van Loan
Warawa
Watson
Williamson
Woodworth
Young (Oakville)
Zimmer — 246

NAYS

Members

Fortin
Plamondon

Patry
Rathgeber — 4

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

● (1625)

INSTRUCTION TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP) moved:

That it be an instruction to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights that, during its consideration of Bill C-13, An Act to amend the Criminal Code, the Canada Evidence Act, the Competition Act and the Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Act, the Committee be granted the power to divide the Bill into two bills: the first consisting of clauses 2 to 7 and 27, related to cyberbullying; and the second bill containing all the other provisions of Bill C-13 related to other online activity.

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The motion of instruction in the name of the hon. member for Burnaby—New Westminster, just read to the House is out of order and cannot be put to the House. It is obviously part of an ongoing effort by the NDP, in this case, to obstruct and resist the Board of Internal Economy meeting under way. However, whatever the motives may be, the fact is this.

On Monday, May 26, the hon. member for Gatineau moved a motion of instruction, which was adjourned, and pursuant to Standing Order 66 (1), now sits on the order paper as Government Motion No. 11.

For the Chair's ease of reference, let me read the motion. It states:

Routine Proceedings

That it be an instruction to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights that, during its consideration of Bill C-13, An Act to amend the Criminal Code, the Canada Evidence Act, the Competition Act and the Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Act, the Committee be granted the power to divide the Bill into two bills: the first consisting of clauses 2 to 7 and 27, related to cyberbullying; and the second bill containing all the other provisions of Bill C-13.

Now let me read the motion of the hon. member for Burnaby—New Westminster. It states:

That it be an instruction to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights that, during its consideration of Bill C-13, An Act to amend the Criminal Code, the Canada Evidence Act, the Competition Act and the Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Act, the Committee be granted the power to divide the Bill into two bills: the first consisting of clauses 2 to 7 and 27, related to cyberbullying; and the second bill containing all the other provisions of Bill C-13 related to other online activity.

Mr. Speaker, the difference is these five words, which were added at the end of today's motion, "related to other online activity".

What is indisputable is that the substantive effect of these two motions is identical. Having established that these motions are for all intents and purposes identical, let me turn to page 560 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, which discusses the rule of anticipation. It states:

The moving of a motion was formerly subject to the ancient "rule of anticipation" which is no longer strictly observed. According to this rule, which applied to other proceedings as well as to motions, a motion could not anticipate a matter which was standing on the *Order Paper* for further discussion, whether as a bill or a motion, and which was contained in a more effective form of proceeding (for example, a bill or any other Order of the Day is more effective than a motion, which in turn has priority over an amendment, which in turn is more effective than a written or oral question). If such a motion were allowed, it could indeed forestall or block a decision from being taken on the matter already on the *Order Paper*.

Picking up at a later paragraph, I again quote:

The rule is dependent on the principle which forbids the same question from being decided twice within the same session.

That is a quite well-established principle we are all familiar with.

It continues:

It does not apply, however, to similar or identical motions or bills which appear on the *Notice Paper* prior to debate. The rule of anticipation becomes operative only when one of two similar motions on the *Order Paper* is actually proceeded with.

That is to say at this very moment.

Continuing on with the passage, it states:

For example, two bills similar in substance will be allowed to stand on the *Order Paper*

We have that, for example, I would note, with regard to Veterans Affairs. It continues:

but only one may be moved and disposed of. If the first bill is withdrawn (by unanimous consent, often after debate has started), the second may be proceeded with. If a decision is taken on the first bill, the other may not be proceeded with. A point of order regarding anticipation may be raised when the second motion is proposed from the Chair, if the first has already been proposed to the House and has become an Order of the Day.

That is exactly the present case, since the substantively identical motion of the hon. member for Gatineau is an order of the day, identified on the order paper as Government Motion No. 11.

As a result, the motion of the hon. member for Burnaby—New Westminster would offend the rule of anticipation. Therefore, I would submit that the motion of instruction you just read should not

be proposed to the House, and the House should, in my respectful view, carry on with the remaining items of routine proceedings.

• (1630)

I of course note that I raised this immediately, at the moment the motion was read to the House, at the very earliest opportunity, the appropriate point in time to raise such a point of order.

Clearly, the House has already made this, as the rules say, an order of the day. It has already dealt with it. It is a duplication of that effort. As such, it is entirely out of order at this time.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, we almost applauded on this side, because we think the government House leader actually made our point.

The first point the government House leader made was that it is a different motion. He also referenced the fact that it is related to other online activity, as part of this motion that is being presented today, which does not configure at all in the other motion he was mentioning.

Second, and I am quoting from O'Brien, and the government House leader kind of glossed over this, it is important to read what O'Brien and Bosc also says:

...the ancient "rule of anticipation" which is no longer strictly observed.

The government House leader kind of glossed over this. It is from O'Brien and Bosc, which is really our procedural bible:

The moving of a motion was formerly subject to the ancient "rule of anticipation" which is no longer strictly observed.

We are not talking about the 17th century here. We are talking about 2014 in Canada.

The third point is probably the most conclusive. We have talked about the ancient process. The government House leader referenced something from the 17th or 18th century. I certainly appreciate his reference of historical fact, but it does not have relevance to our standing orders today.

The third point, again from O'Brien and Bosc:

While the rule of anticipation is part of the Standing Orders in the British House of Commons, it has never been so in the Canadian House of Commons. Furthermore, references to past attempts to apply this British rule to Canadian practice are inconclusive.

I certainly agree that if the government House leader was standing in the British House of Commons, he might be right, but he is standing in the Canadian House of Commons, it is 2014, and this motion is very much in order.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, if I could address the first issue on whether the two motions are the same, the words are entirely the same, except for the five added on at the end, which we as lawyers would call obiter—

Mr. Peter Julian: This is debate. You have already said that.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Yes, it is debate. I am debating the point of order. I am responding to the arguments that have been raised by the opposition House leader. I know he does not want—

Routine Proceedings

The Speaker: Order. There are several members who are participating in the discussion without having been granted the floor. The Chair needs to hear these types of arguments so the Chair can make a decision that will serve the House well. The key to that is that I need to be able to hear them and not hear members who are not actually recognized by the Chair.

If members have things they want to say, I suggest they go outside into the lobby, and they can say whatever they want, but not in the Chamber.

The hon. government House leader is making a point that I would like to hear.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, the substance of both motions is identical. The substance is to divide the bill into two bills, the first consisting of clause 2 to 7 and 27, and the other bill containing all the rest of the provisions.

Regardless of how one describes the rest of the provisions, the consequence of the two motions is identical. Two separate bills, one which has clauses 2 to 7 and 27, and one which is the balance of the other clauses.

The words describing them, that they are different, is really of no consequence. The fact is, it is an identical motion in terms of what it is asking this House to do.

In terms of the reference to the British practice, the hon. member may not be familiar with the fact that in our rules, our processes, and our procedures, it is often the case that we have reference to the mother Parliament. It is indeed the parent of all our rules and all our followings. It is a common practice to follow those proceedings.

However, we are not simply doing that. We are actually going much farther than that, following no less an authority than O'Brien and Bosc, which says when the rule becomes operative in our House, and that is:

...only when one of two similar motions on the Order Paper is actually proceeded with.... if the first has already been proposed to the House and has become an Order of the Day.

That is exactly what has happened in this case. That is exactly why this motion is out of order.

● (1635)

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, the government House leader just repeated the same argument. I will not take any more of your time.

It is very clear when we read O'Brien and Bosc that we are talking about an ancient rule that the government House leader is trying to reintroduce and something that in O'Brien and Bosc is very clearly part of the Standing Orders in another Parliament. It "has never been so".

I am quoting O'Brien and Bosc. That is kind of an important reference.

...it has never been so in the Canadian House of Commons.

It is very clear that we are talking about a motion that introduces other elements. Quite frankly, it is very clear that it is in order, and the rule of anticipation, cited by the government House leader, and with due respect I certainly understand his historic model, is not

relevant to the Canadian House of Commons. It is certainly not relevant to 2014.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, I will make one final submission in response to the historical reference because the hon. member, in making a motion for instruction, appears ignorant of the history of the motion of instruction and its use in the House. If I may read further from the legislative process in O'Brien and Bosc, at page 752, it reads as follows:

Motions of instruction derive from British practice during the second half of the 19th century.

It is funny that he seems to think that is irrelevant. That is the motion that he is seeking to make.

They were carried over into the practice of the Canadian House of Commons, although they have been rarely used.

As such, it being a British practice and being rarely used in this House, the very best authorities for it are the British. We are not relying merely on those, though. We are also relying on the text and words and principles and rules found in our own bible, so to speak, the green book, O'Brien and Bosc.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, the repetition of arguments I do not think is useful in this case. I would cite O'Brien and Bosc: "it has never been so in the Canadian House of Commons".

Quite frankly, the government House leader is stretching, trying to find other elements, but the reality is that O'Brien and Bosc, which is our guide, talks about this ancient practice, the rule of anticipation, which is no longer strictly observed, and the rule of anticipation has never been part of the Canadian House of Commons Standing Orders.

I think it is pretty clear that this motion is very much in order.

● (1640)

The Speaker: I appreciate the points raised by both the government House leader and the opposition House leader. Upon examination of the section of O'Brien and Bosc, upon which both House leaders have relied extensively for their arguments, it seems to the Chair that the key concept is the question of whether or not the motions are substantially the same.

Upon examination of both motions on the notice paper, it does seem that the motions are substantially the same and that the principles cited by the government House leader as to the practice of the House are persuasive to the Chair. Accordingly, we will not be proceeding with the motion at this time.

We will now proceed with the rest of the items under routine proceedings.

*Routine Proceedings***PETITIONS**

CANADA POST

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions today. One is from hundreds of residents, mostly from St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador. They are very concerned about the plans that Canada Post has, which have been approved the government, to cut between 6,000 and 8,000 jobs at Canada Post and to remove service from over five million households that receive home delivery. They will do this over the next five years.

The undersigned are calling upon the Government of Canada to reverse the Canada Post cuts to Canada public postal service and instead look for alternative revenue-generating ideas, such as postal banking, for example, which has worked in many other countries.

We know, of course, that Canada is the only country of the G8 or G7, whichever we prefer, that is making the move to get away from home delivery. We are not even just getting away from home delivery. Canada Post claims that is only a small portion of people who receive it, but this is not the case.

• (1645)

CADETS

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is related to the question of the Valcartier cadets. We have petitions from individuals supporting the notion that the Government of Canada, through the Minister of National Defence, grant the Canadian Forces ombudsman the authority to investigate the case of the death of six cadets and the wounding of at least 60 more due to a grenade exploding at a cadet camp in 1974, which has not been fully investigated.

The minister has agreed to do this. It is an important matter, and we hope that the proper investigation takes place.

The 40th anniversary of this event is this summer, on July 30. Proper redress and proper assistance has not been given to the victims of this tragedy.

AGRICULTURE

Ms. Joyce Bateman (Winnipeg South Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to present a petition that was presented to me by Ms. Katharina Stieffenhofer on the subject of Bill C-18.

IMPAIRED DRIVING

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present many petitions here on the issue of the current impaired driving laws. The petitioners are calling on the government to implement new mandatory minimum sentencing for those persons convicted of impaired driving causing death.

[*Translation*]

CANADA POST

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by some 100 people about Canada Post service cuts.

Canada Post's plan to cut services would eliminate home mail delivery for five million homes and significantly increase postal rates.

The petitioners are asking the Government of Canada to reject Canada Post's plan to cut services and explore other ways to modernize the crown corporation's business plan.

[*English*]

IMPAIRED DRIVING

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise today to present three separate petitions on behalf of Canadians regarding impaired driving causing death. Citizens want to see tougher laws and the implementation of new mandatory minimum sentencing for those persons convicted of impaired driving causing death.

PENSIONS

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today, I have three petitions from Edmonton residents.

Two of the petitions are calling for increases in the Canada pension and Quebec pension. The petitioners are concerned that retirement security is one of the most pressing issues facing Canadians, but the cuts to OAS slashed \$11 billion from seniors, who are now required to wait until they are 67 years old.

They are calling on the government to expand CPP and QPP and to restore the OAS entitlement to 65.

CANADA POST

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the third petition is from Edmontonians calling on the Government of Canada to stop the devastating cuts to Canada Post.

FIREARMS RECLASSIFICATION

Mr. Rob Anders (Calgary West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition on behalf of citizens concerned about firearm reclassification, which aims to devalue and deprive them of their private property. The petitioners want all of Bill C-68 repealed, not just the billion-dollar long gun registry.

The petitioners call upon Parliament to eliminate the bureaucratic chief of firearms officers.

HUMAN RIGHTS IN VENEZUELA

Mr. Rob Anders (Calgary West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I also have a petition on behalf of Canadians who are disturbed by the crisis in Venezuela. The petitioners are concerned about human rights being violated, and people detained and tortured for merely non-violent protesting.

The petitioners call upon our government to take an active role against the tyranny of the Maduro government and call attention to the dangers facing Venezuela, which will not disappear by turning a blind eye. They want us to implement economic sanctions against those authorities responsible for human rights violations.

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Rob Anders (Calgary West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the last petition I have is from people across Canada who want the worst cases of sexual assault to be prosecuted more heavily. The petitioners do not want to see us coddle sexual predators, but to see us respect the plight of victims. As a result, the petitioners want to see us give sexual predators the punishment they deserve.

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition today on behalf of Prince Edward Islanders who are concerned about the rights of farmers to be able to save, reuse, select, exchange, and sell seeds. This is something that farmers have been doing for an indeterminate amount of time. That appears to be jeopardized by changes to the Seeds Act and the Plant Breeders' Rights Act under Bill C-18.

The petitioners call upon Parliament to enshrine in legislation the inalienable rights of farmers and other Canadians to save, reuse, select, exchange, and sell seeds.

[Translation]

QUEBEC BRIDGE

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to present three petitions.

The first asks the federal government to put an end to legal proceedings and work with CN to make the Quebec Bridge safe.

• (1650)

PENSIONS

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition I am presenting asks the Government of Canada to collaborate with provincial governments to enhance, among other things, the Quebec pension plan and the Canada pension plan, and to restore the age of eligibility for old age security to 65.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the third petition asks the government to put an end to excessive credit card rates, ATM fees, and fees to receive paper bills.

[English]

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by residents of Winnipeg North who want the Prime Minister to know that they do not support the increase in the number of politicians who are going to be elected to the House of Commons. Having 30 new MPs will cost the taxpayer millions of wasted tax dollars every year. Some have estimated the cost at \$30 million-plus annually.

FIREARMS RECLASSIFICATION

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present today.

The first petition is on the changes to the classification of firearms without adequate public consultation and public notice. The

Routine Proceedings

petitioners note that this erodes the confidence of Canadians in our justice system. The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to enforce the Firearms Act in an open, transparent, and fair manner, respecting the right to own property.

SEX SELECTION

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition has to do with gender-selection abortion. The petitioners note that 92% of Canadians believe that sex-selective pregnancy termination should be illegal. The petitioners call upon Parliament to condemn discrimination against girls occurring through gender-selection pregnancy termination.

CANADIAN FORCES

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions.

The first petition is in regard to what is happening to veterans and members of the Canadian Forces all across this country.

First, the petitioners are concerned about the closure of nine regional offices for Veterans Affairs, and second, the fact that the number of suicides among Canadian Forces personnel and veterans has increased to an alarming rate. The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to address the needs of Canadian Forces members by making sure that they and veterans have timely access to mental health services.

PENSIONS

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition has to do with the changes to old age security.

The petitioners are very concerned about the fact that the age for entitlement to old age security has increased to 67 from 65. This causes great harm and hardship to many seniors. The petitioners call upon the government to maintain the retirement age for OAS at 65 and make the required investment in the guaranteed income supplement so that we could lift every senior in this country out of poverty.

[Translation]

CHAMPLAIN BRIDGE

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present today.

It is my privilege to present a petition on behalf of people in my riding, Brossard—La Prairie. They are asking the federal government not to impose a toll on the new Champlain Bridge. Over 1,500 people have signed this petition.

I would like to sincerely thank the 150 people who showed up for the day of action against the toll and all of those who continue to canvass their neighbourhoods gathering signatures for the petition. They should be congratulated on their remarkable commitment. Thank you.

Government Orders

[English]

FALUN GONG

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition requests the Government of Canada to pass a resolution to establish measures to stop the Chinese Communist regime's crime of systematically murdering Falun Gong practitioners for their organs, and to implement legislation to combat forced organ harvesting. They ask the government to publicly call for an end to the persecution of Falun Gong in China.

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present two petitions. The first is from residents of Newfoundland and Labrador, as well as Nova Scotia, British Columbia, and one from Ontario. Petitioners are calling on Parliament to ensure stable, predictable, and secure funding for the national public broadcaster, the CBC.

FALUN GONG

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is signed by over 3,000 individuals from all over Canada, primarily Ontario. It is calling on the government to take steps to protect the human rights of Falun Gong and Falun Dafa practitioners in China. They note that in the People's Republic of China they lack human rights, are often jailed, and their situation is indeed desperate.

CANADA POST

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition regarding Canada Post. I have done this many times for many communities, This is the community of Tilting, on Fogo Island. I have 98 signatures, all from the one community, calling on the Government of Canada to instruct Canada Post to maintain, expand, and improve postal services and cease any proposal to reduce hours and diminish services to the residents of Tilting.

• (1655)

[Translation]

PUBLIC TRANSIT OPERATORS

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table a petition on behalf of the people living on the south shore pertaining to the assaults on bus drivers that happen every year. They want a new separate Criminal Code offence punishing the assault of bus drivers.

[English]

FALUN GONG

Mr. Brent Rathgeber (Edmonton—St. Albert, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to table a petition signed by 112 citizens of Edmonton, St. Albert, and surrounding communities. They are calling on the Government of Canada to help convince the Chinese Communist Party to cease the murdering of Falun Gong practitioners for their organs, to pass legislation to combat organ harvesting, and to publicly call for an end to the persecution of the Falun Gong in China.

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask for consent to return to the rubric of motions for the purpose of asking for concurrence in a motion from procedures and House affairs I presented earlier today.

The Deputy Speaker: Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: There is no consent.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

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

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

PROTECTION OF COMMUNITIES AND EXPLOITED PERSONS ACT

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC) moved that Bill C-36, an act to amend the Criminal Code in response to the Supreme Court of Canada decision in Attorney General of Canada v. Bedford and to make consequential amendments to other acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to commence the second reading debate on Bill C-36, the protection of communities and exploited persons act, a comprehensive and compassionate Canadian response to the Supreme Court decision in Bedford.

It may come as a surprise to some, but to put this in context, in current Canadian law, neither the sale nor the purchase of sexual services is illegal. That would be known to many in the chamber who are police officers or former police officers, many of whom are joining us for this debate.

It is well known to the member for Kildonan—St. Paul, who has dedicated much of her life to helping those who find themselves in prostitution, and I want to express appreciation for that work.

Government Orders

The existing criminal offences prohibit activities related to prostitution. This bill is in direct response to the Supreme Court of Canada's Bedford decision, on December 20, 2013, which found three of the prostitution-related offences unconstitutional, based upon the court's view that the offences prevent those who sell sexual services from taking measures to protect themselves when engaged in prostitution, which I think can fairly be described as a risky, but previously legal, activity.

That would change, as a result of the bill, in terms of its legality. It was a key consideration for the government's response.

The Supreme Court was clear. Its decision does not mean that Parliament is precluded from imposing limits on where and how prostitution may be conducted.

Significantly, the court recognized not only the complexity of the issue but also the ability of the government to legislate. I am quoting from the decision, at paragraph 165, which states:

The regulation of prostitution is a complex and delicate matter. It will be for Parliament, should it choose to do so, to devise a new approach, reflecting the different elements of the existing regime.

Bill C-36 would do just that. It is a brand new approach, one that would transform Canada's criminal provisions of prostitution laws. It is a new approach based upon the prevailing thinking in modern industrialized countries.

Bill C-36 proposes law reform that would signal a significant shift in prostitution-related criminal law policy from treatment of prostitution as a nuisance toward treatment of prostitution for what it is: a form of exploitation.

This is not a life from a Hollywood movie, portrayed in movies like *Pretty Woman*. It is an inherently dangerous pursuit, often driven by factors such as violence, addiction, poverty, intimidation, and mental illness. These are very often the most marginalized and victimized of our citizens, vulnerable Canadians, often aboriginal, new Canadians, brought into a life of prostitution at a very early age and most often through no fault of their own.

The bill is about protecting vulnerable Canadians, as encapsulated in the title.

• (1700)

[*Translation*]

Let us be clear: we do not believe that other approaches, such as decriminalization or legalization, could make prostitution a safe activity.

The evidence, including the evidence submitted to the courts in the Bedford case, shows that prostitution is extremely dangerous no matter where it takes place. It also proves that decriminalization and legalization lead to increased human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Failing to ensure the consistent application of criminal law to the wrongful acts of prostitution is simply not an option.

[*English*]

The Supreme Court gave Parliament one year to respond to its findings in Bedford. We have introduced Bill C-36 well ahead of time to ensure that the court's ruling does not result in

decriminalization, and to have even greater opportunity to examine legislation, and to ensure that even greater harm to vulnerable persons, particularly women and children, does not follow.

For the first time in Canadian criminal law, the bill would criminalize the purchase of sexual services; in other words, it would now make prostitution illegal.

The impact of the new prohibitions would be borne predominantly by those who purchase sex and persons who exploit others through prostitution. The bill is intended to reduce the demands for prostitution, which disproportionately impact on society's most marginalized and vulnerable.

The bill would also modernize existing procuring offences, to ensure that those who exploit others through prostitution are held to account for capitalizing on the demand created by purchasers.

These reforms are informed by new, contemporary legislative measures outlined in the bill's preamble, which include protecting communities and those who are exploited through prostitution from prostitution's implicit harms, which include sexual exploitation, the risk of violence and intimidation, exposure of children to the sale of sex as a commodity, and related criminal activities such as human trafficking and drug-related and organized crime.

Also in the preamble is recognizing the social harm caused by prostitution's normalization of sexual activity as a commodity to be bought and sold; and protecting the human dignity and equality of all by discouraging prostitution, which we know disproportionately impacts women and children.

Bill C-36 proposes two entirely new offences, which I would submit differentiates it from other models as a distinctly Canadian approach: purchasing sexual services and advertising the sale of sexual services. Both are hybrid offences with maximum penalties of 5 years on indictment and 18 months on summary conviction. The purchasing offence would also carry mandatory minimum fines.

The purchasing offence targets the demand for prostitution, thereby making prostitution an illegal activity, and to complement this offence, the advertising offence targets the promotion of this exploitative activity, thereby furthering the legislation's overall objective of reducing the demand for sexual services.

An additional objective is to reduce the likelihood of third parties facilitating exploitation through prostitution for their gain, and the key and operative word here is "exploitation". Consistent with the bill's treatment of persons who sell their own sexual services as victims, the persons would be immunized from prosecution if they advertised their own sexual services.

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Never before have these activities been criminalized in Canadian law, and the bill would also criminalize receiving a financial or material benefit, knowing that it was obtained by or derived from the prostitution of others. This offence replaces the existing offence of living on the avails of prostitution, struck down by the Supreme Court.

The proposed approach has been carefully tailored to address the specific vulnerability of those involved. The material benefit offence strikes a careful balance and ensures that those who sell their own sexual services have the same ability to interact with others as anyone else, while also recognizing the dangers, harms, and risks involved in allowing the development of economic interests in others' prostitution.

Legislated exceptions clarify that the offence does not apply to non-exploitative relationships. For example, those who are in legitimate living arrangements with persons who sell their own sexual services, such as children, spouses, or roommates, would not be caught under these sections. Neither would those who offered goods or services to the general public, such as accountants, taxi drivers, or security companies. Moreover, the material benefit offence would not apply to those who offered goods or services on an informal basis, which could include such things as babysitting or even protective services.

To be clear, Bill C-36 also recognizes the risks associated with allowing persons to benefit from the profits of others' prostitution. A person who initially poses as a benevolent helper may become unscrupulous in order to maximize profits that are contingent on the provision of sexual services for others. We know this happens. For that reason, the bill stipulates that none of the exceptions to the material benefit apply where the person who received the benefit engaged in coercive measures, such as using violence or intimidation, abusing a position of trust or power, or engaging in conduct that amounts to procuring or receiving a benefit in the context of a brothel.

This approach affords some room for sellers of their own sexual services to take steps to protect themselves in response to the concerns raised by Supreme Court of Canada in *Bedford*, while also ensuring that the criminal law holds to account the pimps or anyone else in an exploitative relationship, working through prostitution.

The bill also proposes to modernize existing procuring and child prostitution offences. The proposed procuring offence reformulates existing offences with respect to procurement—paragraphs 212(1)(a) to (i)—to ensure consistency with the new material benefit and purchasing offences.

● (1705)

Procuring, as we know, is a serious offence that involves inciting or causing others to sell sexual services. That is why this legislation proposes to increase the maximum penalty to 14 years from 10 years imprisonment.

[*Translation*]

Bill C-36 modernizes and reformulates child prostitution offences as aggravating forms of offences related to the purchase of sexual services, receiving a material benefit and procuring. In addition, it increases the applicable sentences. The maximum penalty for the

offence prohibiting the purchase of sexual services from children would increase to 10 years imprisonment from the current five, and the mandatory minimum would increase from six months to one year for repeat offenders.

Offences related to receiving a material benefit and procuring involving children would have a maximum sentence of 40 years and a mandatory minimum of two and five years, respectively.

[*English*]

Moreover, through these amendments, the government would send a clear message to those who exploit vulnerable persons and, in particular, inflict trauma and revictimization on women and children.

All of the offences that I have just described comprehensively address the exploitative conduct engaged in by those who create the demand for sexual services and those who capitalize on that demand.

Bill C-36 does not stop there. It recognizes and addresses the harms that prostitution also causes to communities. It would achieve this objective in two ways. It would impose higher mandatory minimum fines for purchasers if they commit the purchasing offence in public places that are near schools, parks, religious institutions, or places where children can reasonably be expected to be present. This is the same description found in the Criminal Code in other sections. There is an already well subscribed definition of a public place. This approach would also provide an additional measure of protection to those who are vulnerable in our communities.

The bill would also comprehensively protect children from exposure to the sale of sex as a commodity. In that regard, it proposes a new summary offence that would criminalize communicating for the purpose of selling sexual services in public places where children can reasonably be expected to be present.

The bill recognizes the vulnerability of those who sell their own sexual services by immunizing them from prosecution for any part they may play in the purchasing, material benefit, procuring, or advertising offences vis-à-vis their own sexual services.

As I mentioned, children, on balance when doing the calculation, can also be considered vulnerable, so the bill seeks to strike that careful balance, part of that being the provision of a tool that would allow law enforcement to ensure that children are not harmed through exposure to prostitution. Parents in particular will be relieved to hear this.

The bill also proposes related amendments that would complement its approach to prostitution. First, with the definition of a weapon, this part of the Criminal Code has been somewhat overlooked in the public debate on this legislation. This section is intended to ensure that offenders who possess weapons of restraint, such as handcuffs, rope, or duct tape, with the intent to commit an offence, or use such weapons to commit a violent offence, are held accountable. I suspect that much of the focus on this stems from the horrific circumstances that we know occurred in the *Picton* case in British Columbia.

• (1710)

[*Translation*]

This amendment has implications for three offences: possession of weapon for dangerous purpose, section 88; assault with a weapon, section 290; and sexual assault with a weapon, section 291. This approach will better protect all of the victims of these offences, including those suffering from extreme exploitation as prostitutes, who are particularly vulnerable to sexual assault and assault.

[*English*]

Bill C-36 would also ensure consistency of penalties between human trafficking offences and the proposed prostitution ones. We know that prostitution and human trafficking are related criminal activities. It follows that the penalties for both should reflect the severity of that conduct. That is why this bill proposes to increase the maximum penalties and impose mandatory minimum penalties for receiving a material benefit from child trafficking and withholding documents for the purposes of committing child trafficking. The maximum penalty for both child-specific trafficking and prostitution material benefit would be 14 years of imprisonment, with a mandatory minimum penalty of two years. The maximum penalty for withholding documents for the purpose of committing child trafficking would increase to 10 years, with a mandatory minimum sentence of a year.

The bill would also amend the offence prohibiting trafficking in persons to impose mandatory minimum penalties when the victim is an adult. The mandatory minimum penalty would be five years if the offences involved kidnapping, aggravated assault, sexual assault, or caused death, and four years in all other cases. The offence prohibiting trafficking of children already includes mandatory minimum penalties.

These are reforms proposed by this bill, but why are they necessary? In particular, what do we know about prostitution in the country today?

Although the incidence of prostitution is impossible to truly ascertain, given its clandestine nature, we know from research that prostitution occurs in all parts of the country, most often on the street but also through escort agencies, in massage parlours, in private apartments and houses, and in strip clubs, hotels, and restaurants. It is facilitated through the Internet and print media advertising.

We know that 75% to 80% of those involved in prostitution are women. As I mentioned earlier, many come from the most marginalized groups of society and share common vulnerabilities, such as childhood abuse, neglect, poverty, and addictions, and they lack the education and skills necessary to exit prostitution.

Research indicates as well that a large number of those who provide sexual services entered prostitution when they were mere children, and that they experienced sexual abuse prior to their first prostitution experience. Furthermore, aboriginal women and girls are disproportionately represented among those who are exploited through prostitution.

There is simply no getting away from the fact that prostitution is an extremely dangerous activity. Studies before the courts in the Bedford case have shown that prostitution is multi-traumatic. It

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regularly involves physical violence, sexual violence, forceable confinement, and drugs, and involvement in prostitution often causes post-traumatic stress disorder, which can result in permanent harm.

Communities are also negatively affected by all forms of prostitution. Used condoms and drug paraphernalia may be discarded in public places, such as parks, playgrounds, or school grounds. Other community harms may include noise, impeding traffic, children witnessing acts of prostitution, harassment of residents, unsanitary acts, and unwelcome solicitation of children by johns.

Prostitution also poses other risks because of its link with human trafficking, as mentioned, which is another form of sexual exploitation, as well as its link to drug-related crimes and organized criminal groups that thrive in that environment. Two recent international studies indicate that there is cause for concern in these areas. These studies show that jurisdictions that have decriminalized prostitution have often experienced increases in human trafficking and further violence, which is unacceptable.

The risks and harms associated with prostitution are readily acknowledged. However, the issue of which legal framework should govern adult prostitution remains highly contentious. The results of the government's extensive public consultations indicate and demonstrate that Canadians are still divided on this issue, but overall the results show that the majority of Canadians consulted prefer a criminal law response, one that involves the criminalization of purchasers of sexual services and of those who exploit prostitution for their own gain.

In addition to the legally oriented response through this legislation, we have also, in a compassionate and Canadian way, brought forward additional resources to partner with provinces and organizations throughout the country that provide front-line services to help prostitutes to exit from prostitution by giving them choices and alternatives that would allow them to leave this exploitative field and find a better life.

• (1715)

Noting the time, I urge all members to support this important piece of legislation. There will be ample time to examine it at committee. There will be an opportunity to hear from Canadians further on this important matter. The objective here is clearly to protect the vulnerable, to protect our communities, and to move, for the sake of all those involved, to a better place and a better life.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the question to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment is as follows: the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, The Environment.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for his speech even though I feel that he took quite a bit of liberty with the Supreme Court decision. I am not sure his quotes from the court's decision were altogether complete.

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This is a very emotional issue for many people. Some have based their careers on this issue, and many others are much less aware and have not necessarily had the opportunity to do the consultations the minister has done. We have repeatedly asked him to refer this bill to the Supreme Court to be sure no mistakes have been made. I gather from the minister's response to journalists—which was much clearer than his response here in the House—that the answer was no and that he had no intention of doing so.

That being said, if he is not prepared to send his bill to the Supreme Court, seeing as this bill has been the subject of much criticism from coast to coast with the exception of a few Conservative voices, is he prepared to share the legal opinions? As the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, he is obligated to ensure that bills before the House comply with the Constitution and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. If he has those legal opinions, including the survey his department commissioned, can he forward them to us before the committee begins its study? That will give us a chance to consult them before our study.

I would also like him to define the expression “sexual services” because it is used frequently throughout the bill. What does the government mean by “sexual services” in Bill C-36?

• (1720)

[*English*]

Hon. Peter MacKay: Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the member that the polling that was done internally by the Department of Justice will of course be made public in due course, as it always is.

I completely disagree with her characterization of the response from the public as negative. There are arguments on both sides. That is natural and to be expected.

As for my interpretation of the Supreme Court decision, I can assure her and the House that I examined the decision very carefully, as did the department. It did provide framework references for the legislation itself to respond, particularly in the areas that I outlined in my remarks, if she listened or wanted to go back in *Hansard*, with regard to the ability of prostitutes to protect themselves. That is a primary consideration and is something that we were very concerned with.

I would point her as well to the sections of the bill that are aimed specifically at protecting prostitutes, as well as the community. That is the balance that was sought. This bill takes a very comprehensive approach. There were extensive consultations; some 31,000 Canadians participated in the online consultation, and I personally took part in round tables and heard from both ends of the spectrum, both those in favour of legalization and those in favour of complete criminalization. People currently and actively involved in prostitution attended some of those sessions, so we did hear from a broad cross-section of Canadians on the subject. We feel we have struck the proper balance in the best interests of the public and of prostitutes.

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to follow up on a couple of questions that were posed by my colleague from Gatineau.

When the minister says that he is prepared to release the poll that Canadians have paid \$175,000 for in due course, I wonder if he

could offer us any explanation for the delay. Is there any good reason that it cannot be released now, in advance of the committee dealing with this matter?

Second, the last two times that the government was faced with a situation that dramatically intersected with the charter was arguably the Senate reference and the Nadon decision. In both those situations, Conservatives either sought outside legal opinions with respect to constitutionality or submitted those cases to the Supreme Court of Canada for a reference. In both those situations, they did so when they knew there was going to be a constitutional issue.

This case comes right out of the Supreme Court of Canada because of a conflict with the charter. Given how Conservatives have dealt with charter-sensitive cases before, could the minister explain why he is so dead set against taking the same approach again? Is it because of the result in the last two Supreme Court of Canada references?

Hon. Peter MacKay: Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member referred to me in the last debate, I know he is no Einstein, but he would know that this reference actually came from the Supreme Court. I would suggest to him that we are doing our job by bringing forward legislation that responds to the sections that were struck by the Supreme Court. We are also doing what would be expected of the government and the Department of Justice by ensuring that while the laws of Canada are constitutional, they protect vulnerable Canadians. That is at the very heart of the bill itself.

On the disclosure aspect, he might also know that the natural timeframe for release is six months. We may release in advance of that in the interests of ensuring that the committee is able to do its good work and in response to the timeframe that we are working under as a result of the Supreme Court giving us one year to respond. With that as the backdrop, again, we may decide to release that information in advance of the six-month timeframe.

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I certainly want to thank the minister for his absolutely fabulous bill. It has, for the first time, changed the paradigms in this country about those who are trafficked and those who are involved in prostitution at this point in time.

Could the minister please talk about the compassionate side? The purchasing of sex would now be illegal for the first time, but there is another very compassionate side to the bill that is going to address the victims of this crime.

• (1725)

Hon. Peter MacKay: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Kildonan—St. Paul. I think I can fairly say that she epitomizes much of the compassionate and very practical side of this bill. She has been outstanding in her work in helping those in prostitution, particularly those who have been caught up in human trafficking, which is, again, very much a subset of those who become involved in prostitution.

She is right that in addition to the legislation, this is going to require a very comprehensive approach. It will require reaching out and working with many organizations that do similar outstanding work and it will require the type of leadership that she has demonstrated in helping prostitutes deal with many of the underlying causes, which involve, in some cases, years of violence. Children have been abducted, intimidated, blackmailed, drugged, and brought into this life of prostitution through a number of very insidious circumstances.

This specific pool of resources, in addition to other programs and program spending, will be designed to help them exit the life of prostitution by giving them career options and helping them with homelessness, child care, addiction problems, and treatment for many of the causes that led to what is not really a choice.

In addition to the laws designed to go after the johns, pimps, and perpetrators, part of the effort is to take the emphasis and stigma off the women, the victims, and to see them in a different light. To move away from the paradigm of seeing victims being re-victimised under the Criminal Code, we are now putting the focus and emphasis on those who are truly exploitative and bring danger to the streets and the prostitutes. At the same time, we are putting programs around those who truly need our help.

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate, the hon. member for Burnaby—New Westminster. I will advise the member that he only has about two minutes before we move on to private members' business.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I indicated a number of times that the bill should be referred to the Supreme Court, but the government does not seem to be listening.

Accordingly, pursuant to Standing Order 60, seconded by the member for Vaudreuil-Soulanges, I move:

That the House do now adjourn.

[*English*]

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

Government Orders

● (1805)

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

(*Division No. 203*)

YEAS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Angus
Ashton	Atamanenko
Aubin	Benskin
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe
Boivin	Boutin-Sweet
Brosseau	Caron
Chicoine	Chisholm
Choquette	Cleary
Côté	Cullen
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Vancouver East)
Day	Dionne Labelle
Donnelly	Doré Lefebvre
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Fortin
Freeman	Garrison
Genest-Jourdain	Giguère
Godin	Grogulé
Harris (St. John's East)	Julian
Lapointe	Laverdière
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leslie
Liu	Mai
Marston	Martin
Mathysen	Michaud
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)	Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Nicholls	Nunez-Melo
Papillon	Patry
Péclet	Plamondon
Quach	Rankin
Ravignat	Raynault
Scott	Sellah
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	Sitsabaesan
Stewart	Sullivan — 64

NAYS

Members

Adams	Adler
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambler	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson
Andrews	Armstrong
Ashfield	Aspin
Bateman	Bélangier
Bennett	Benoit
Bergen	Bernier
Bezan	Blaney
Block	Boughen
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brisson	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Brown (Barrie)
Butt	Byrne
Calandra	Calkins
Cannan	Carmichael
Carrie	Casey
Chisu	Chong
Clarke	Crockatt
Cuzner	Daniel
Davidson	Dechert
Devolin	Dion
Dreeshen	Dubourg
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dykstra	Eyking
Falk	Fantino
Fast	Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Fletcher
Freeland	Galipeau
Gallant	Gameau
Gill	Glover
Goguen	Goldring
Goodale	Goodyear

Private Members' Business

Gosal	Gourde
Grewal	Harper
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hawn
Hayes	Hillyer
Hoback	Holder
Hsu	James
Jones	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lamoureux
Lauzon	Lebel
Leitch	Lemieux
Leung	Lizon
Lobb	Lukiwski
Lunney	MacAulay
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Maguire	May
Mayes	McCallum
McColeman	McGuinty
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	McLeod
Menegakis	Merrifield
Miller	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Mourani
Nicholson	Norlock
Obhrai	O'Connor
O'Neill Gordon	Opitz
O'Toole	Payne
Poilievre	Preston
Raitt	Rajotte
Rathgeber	Regan
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Ritz
Saxton	Scarpaleggia
Schellenberger	Seeback
Shea	Shipley
Shory	Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind- sor)
Smith	Sopuck
Sorenson	St-Denis
Storseth	Strahl
Sweet	Tilson
Toet	Trost
Trottier	Truppe
Uppal	Valcourt
Valeriotte	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Wallace
Warawa	Warkentin
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)	Wilks
Williamson	Wong
Woodworth	Yelich
Young (Oakville)	Young (Vancouver South)— 172

PAIRED

Nil

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

It being 6:10 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

FEDERAL FRAMEWORK ON LYME DISEASE ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-442, an act respecting a federal framework on Lyme disease, as reported (with amendments) from the committee.

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

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP) seconded by the member for Vancouver East, moved that the bill be concurred in.

(Motion agreed to)

● (1810)

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Translation]

Ms. Elizabeth May, seconded by the member for Vancouver East, moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to all those who supported my bill. We can accomplish a lot when we work together in a non-partisan way.

I would particularly like to thank the Minister of Health, who supported this bill. She shared her opinions and was extraordinarily understanding. I also want to thank her team.

[English]

I have to thank, in particular, the member for Honoré-Mercier, because, in the spirit of non-partisanship, she gave up her slot today, June 11, so that this bill, which has received such widespread support from all corners of the House, could proceed through report stage, third reading, and make its way to the Senate. I am very grateful that Senator Janis Johnson is prepared to take it forward so that we can get this help to the people who need it most.

All members in this place are now much more familiar than they were with the threat of Lyme disease. This bill will not solve all our problems, but it will take us a long way forward. So many members spoke passionately in this place about the importance of the bill. I want to particularly thank members on all sides of the House. The hon. member for South Shore—St. Margaret's gave a passionate speech about the difficulties of diagnosis and what he sees happening in Nova Scotia. My friend, the hon. member for Victoria, talked about our friend who lives in his riding but works with me, Chris Powell and her daughter Nicole Bottles, who testified in committee.

The hon. member for St. Paul's gave me time in committee so I could ask questions, which I otherwise could not have done. There have been so many acts of kindness. It is unusual for a private member's bill to have been seconded initially by the hon. member for Thunder Bay—Superior North with the Green Party, seconded at the next stage by the hon. member for Oakville, a Conservative, who has himself stood on an important issue in Bill C-17, which I hope we can also pass expeditiously, Vanessa's law. Today I am honoured that the health critic for the official opposition, the hon. member for Vancouver East, would be my seconder.

Private Members' Business

I also want to thank the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health for her help. I know I will forget people as I keep thanking everyone. The hon. member for Sault Ste. Marie offered early help and support. Everybody on all sides of the House, including the health critic for the Liberal Party, have been unstinting in their willingness to help the bill pass, to get through amendments and clause by clause in committee. This bill is now called a federal framework on Lyme disease. It has the support, as I have said, of Health Canada.

I will share with the House things that I did not know when I first put this bill forward at first reading almost two years ago exactly. The Public Health Agency of the Government of Canada testified before the health committee that this is one of the fastest-growing infectious diseases in Canada. The evidence from the federal Public Health Agency is that it thinks by the year 2020 Canada could be experiencing 10,000 new cases of Lyme disease every year.

Every step we take in 2014 to put in place national approaches that work federally, provincially, and territorially for better education and better prevention so that people can avoid getting Lyme disease in the first place by knowing what to look for, by avoiding ticks, moving to better diagnoses, working with the doctors across this country, is crucial. The support of the Canadian Medical Association for this bill, the College of Physicians and Surgeons, and the Canadian Lyme Disease Foundation has been absolutely essential. All of these expert bodies recognize that this is a very complicated disease, very difficult to diagnose, and that we should no longer stand for any one of our friends, neighbours, or relatives to have to go to the United States for expensive treatment.

We do not want to hear any more stories from our own constituents who had to sell their homes to be able to afford the treatment that we can provide here in Canada through a federal framework on Lyme disease. Ultimately, we need much better research. I have mentioned a couple of times how indebted I am to the hon. Minister of Health. Funds have been put in place by Health Canada without being tied to this bill, because, of course, a private member's bill cannot put forward funds.

I will close now with the most deep and heartfelt thanks to all in this place tonight and every day. God bless them.

• (1815)

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to thank the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands. I know that she has put an extraordinary amount of work into this bill and it was very good to have it at committee. As she pointed out, there were some amendments made at committee and now there is certainly no problem with the name, in terms of not calling it a national strategy but a federal framework.

As she knows, as she mentioned it briefly, one of the things that was taken out of the bill by the government side was the reference to establishing guidelines and the allocation of funding. That is a consideration we have to think about. I would like to ask the member what she is thinking in terms of how this bill now goes forward. It obviously goes to the Senate, but, beyond that, it is very important that we remain vigilant and monitor the progress of this national framework to ensure that there actually is an allocation of funding so

that research can continue, public awareness can continue, and that a national framework can be developed.

Would the member share any thoughts she has on that?

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I am glad that the hon. member for Vancouver East took a moment or two to put the question so that I could pull myself together. I am quite overwhelmed and very grateful.

I appreciate that there were changes made at committee. I do not believe that they take anything away from the thrust of the bill, but as with any piece of legislation, we will have to remain vigilant.

I know that the current Minister of Health is very committed to this, but the bill will require initiatives from the Minister of Health to hold a conference. That conference will gather expertise from the health and medical community and the Lyme disease patient community and, of course, engage at some level the federal, provincial, and territorial ministers for health.

One amendment changed that process from a six-month mandatory window from the point of passage to twelve months in order to incorporate and provide flexibility for the fact that Bill C-442 would mandate ministerial consultations at a very significant level.

We just have to commit that there is goodwill here. There is an intention to make a difference for people. We have all learned a great deal from the Lyme disease patient community. There are people whose lives have been cut short. They cannot do the job they used to do.

One of the most heartbreaking cases in my own riding is that of a young man who wrote to me and who I saw on Boxing Day. He had not been well enough to come down the corridor on Christmas morning to watch his girls open up their Christmas presents.

The sense of urgency is with us. In the spirit of goodwill, we will monitor this bill and keep pushing in a friendly fashion. We will not let the bill just sit on a shelf. I believe that is the motivation of the Minister of Health, as it is for my hon. colleague, the official opposition health critic.

[*Translation*]

Mr. John Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands for the work that she did and for her efforts in rallying the support of the House for her bill.

Having met a fellow Canadian with this disease, I would like to know what the prognosis is for someone who already has Lyme disease. How will this bill help people with the disease?

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country.

Private Members' Business

By the time they are diagnosed, people have often already had this disease for many years. That makes things difficult because this disease becomes more complex after a few years. More research is needed. We need to find solutions and other ways of tackling this very serious illness.

● (1820)

[*English*]

We need to find ways to get these kids out of wheelchairs and back to school. We can do it.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak in support of third reading of Bill C-442 for a national framework for Lyme disease.

Today is a special day. It is not every private member's bill that gets to third reading. The fact that this bill has means that it has stood the test. It has gone through the challenges of going through second reading, going to committee, through amendments, and here it is back in the House. We are anticipating and hopeful that the bill will be approved today in the House of Commons and then go to the Senate.

I would like to speak briefly to the bill, but I would first like to congratulate the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands for the hard work that she has put into this bill, into building alliances and talking to people in different parties. It is a good example of the goodwill and the solidarity that can develop around an issue when people recognize that something needs to be done. I only wish it would happen more often in the House. There are so many issues that need our attention, collectively, with a spirit of fair play and goodwill. Maybe this bill will be a good model for that, but I wish it would happen a little more often.

When this bill came to the health committee, I was pleased to be there. We went through it and heard witnesses. Hearing the witnesses was incredibly compelling. We heard from Jim Wilson of the Canadian Lyme Disease Foundation. People shared personal experiences about this disease, which is not easy to do in a formalized parliamentary hearing as a witness with all of the official trappings that go along with that.

Chris Powell and her daughter Nicole were quite remarkable. Nicole, who is from British Columbia, was quite remarkable in sharing her experience of having Lyme disease and the suffering she was going through. It is not only physical suffering, which she still endures, but also the emotional anguish of not being able to get a proper diagnosis.

One of the critical elements of the bill is that it would bring together the different elements we need in terms of not only prevention and better public awareness, but a medical community that is in a much more heightened state of awareness with respect to Lyme disease, as well as better clinical diagnostic tools and testing.

We heard horrifying stories from people who had gone to extraordinary lengths to find out why they were so sick and why they could not get help. We know there are two tests available in Canada, but they pertain only to basically one strain of the tick that produces Lyme disease. There is so much that needs to be known.

We heard stories about the amount of money people had spent to go to the United States, for example, where other testing has been available, to finally get a correct diagnosis. Then they would come back to Canada and have somebody contradict that diagnosis. It is a nightmare for these people to live through, not just enduring and living with the disease, but coping with systemic barriers and obstacles to proper diagnosis and get the treatment they need. We heard all of that at committee. It was compelling and it made us all acutely understand that we needed a national framework.

I want to spend a moment on that. As the health critic, I meet with many organizations across the country, in Ottawa, in my riding and elsewhere. There are so many issues and people are literally begging the federal government to show leadership to develop a national strategy, whether for dementia or Alzheimer's. This is just another example of that. It is a reflection of our complex system.

We know that health care is a provincial delivery system. There is no question about that. However, there is a necessity for federal leadership. Under the Canada Health Act, we have a duty and responsibility to ensure that all people in our country, whether rich or poor or whether they live in the north, south, east, west or the centre, in small communities or large urban centres, have accessibility to our health care system. We know the inequities are getting greater, and not just between provinces but also within provinces.

● (1825)

There is an overarching issue that the bill also reflects, which is that we need to see the federal government be at the table. We need to see the federal government take leadership on these issues. Many groups are calling for a national strategy. People know the reality of this kind of scattered approach. It is like a patchwork across the country and that just is not good enough.

The bill speaks about a federal framework and would bring together the players. As the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands has outlined, a key element of the bill is to convene a conference and include people who have Lyme disease and advocates so they are at the table as well. It is really about trying to bring the players together to develop that national framework.

We also heard at committee very interesting testimony from representatives of the Public Health Agency of Canada. They told us that Lyme disease had been a reportable disease only since 2009. We are only beginning to get a sense of the numbers out there. Of course many cases are not reported. Either people do not know they have the disease or if they suspect it, they do not get a proper diagnosis.

I agree with the member that we will face an explosion of cases, particularly with climate change and a warming environment. In southern Canada and places like B.C., where we really have not seen that many cases of Lyme disease, this will be on the increase.

Private Members' Business

I was very interested to hear that the Public Health Agency of Canada was conducting a fairly major public awareness campaign. In fact, the people from the agency assured us that Lyme disease should be a household word by the end of summer. People would know what it was, what they needed to be aware of and what they should do. I hope they are right because we do not want to see anybody suffer through this.

The issue of testing is very important. We heard loud and clear that there was an inadequate testing procedure in Canada. We need to have much better availability of testing with a greater depth of testing for different kinds of bacteria and strains.

Then finally on research, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research told us that some very good research was going on in Canada. I believe one of the researchers was in Calgary and another was maybe in Ontario. We need to fund that research. We need to know about the different strains so people can receive the appropriate diagnostic analysis and treatment.

The New Democrats have been very happy to support this bill all the way through. We are critically aware of this issue. It is something we speak about with our constituents. I am sure many of us have had visits from our constituents who have been affected by Lyme disease.

At the end of the day, we owe gratitude and thanks to the Lyme disease Foundation of Canada, which has done incredible work on this and has never given up. It is not easy. We have resources here. We can bring forward a private member's bill, which I do not want to diminish as it has a very important part. However, what is really wonderful is the fact that the people in the community, those who themselves are suffering, pushed this boulder uphill. They did not give up and they compelled us as legislators to take on this issue and support it.

Finally thanks go to those advocates. We need to remain vigilant and monitor what goes on to ensure this framework becomes a strategy that will help people.

• (1830)

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I did not realize I was speaking to the bill tonight, but I am grateful for the opportunity. I am coming in at the last minute, so I am not as organized as I would like to be, but I am glad I am here and am able to speak to the bill. I have been contacted by a lot of people in Nova Scotia about this issue. Even before I became a member of Parliament, people were talking to me about it.

The member for Saanich—Gulf Islands is passionate about this issue. Lyme disease is very much present on the west coast. It is also present on the east coast. In Nova Scotia we have seen an incredible rise in the number of cases reported.

We have been tracking this since 2002. To the best of my understanding, that is the first reported case in Nova Scotia. We used to talk about maybe there were ticks down in the southern part of Nova Scotia, in the Yarmouth area, for example, but they are moving north.

Climate change is very real. Our climate is changing and it is making it more hospitable for these ticks to head north throughout the entire province of Nova Scotia.

Our first recorded date of Lyme disease being reported in Nova Scotia was 2002. The numbers have gone up incredibly, and show how the climate is changing. In 2011, 57 cases of Lyme disease were reported. In 2012, 52 cases were reported. However, last year, in 2013, 155 cases of Lyme disease were reported. Since 2002, we have had 329 cases.

There is a lot of factors at play here, so it is possible that people just have a better understanding of Lyme disease. People are getting treated a lot sooner. They understand more about it. There has been a lot of media coverage about this back home. Also, the ticks are marching north. It is hard for me to even wrap my head around the fact that Lyme disease is an issue in Nova Scotia when it did not used to be. Things are changing.

Climate change models predict that Nova Scotia is very close to having a suitable climate for a tick establishment across the entire province, that includes the furthest north of Cape Breton. As we can imagine, this is preoccupying people quite a bit back home, and I have received a lot of letters about this when people cross Nova Scotia, including Clark Richards, who wrote to me and said he wanted to see the bill adopted in Parliament as soon as possible.

Clark Richards is a PH.D. student of oceanography at Dalhousie and has a bit of an insider's view about science and how this all works. In addition to wanting us to support the bill, and I was glad to write back and say we did, he also wanted to let me know that as a scientist, he is very concerned about the government's attack on science in our country. He noted that he is very sad and angry that the government was so heck-bent on pursuing an agenda that was so out of line with what he perceived as the priorities of the majority of Canadians, so he wanted to address a few issues. However, he firmly supported the bill and wanted me to know about it as his member of Parliament.

Shari-Lynn Hiltz also wrote to me about a Lyme disease strategy and said that this debate was important. She said that the idea of the bill was that it would bring together Canada's health ministers, medical professionals, scientists and advocates for Canadians with Lyme disease to work toward common goals, and that is a very laudable thing.

The goals that we have in common are increasing awareness and prevention, ensuring accurate diagnoses, tracking the spread of the disease and establishing national standards for the care and treatment of Lyme disease that reflect best practices. She is really excited about the idea of having this national strategy so our country can move forward with a comprehensive strategy to combat this devastating disease.

Those are just two examples of people from my riding. We think that we are here and people are not necessarily paying attention to what goes on in the House of Commons, but they are. They are writing us letters and getting in touch.

Private Members' Business

● (1835)

The Lyme disease advocacy network in Nova Scotia has been fantastic. They met with me years ago when I was first elected and talked to me about what was going on with Lyme disease. When I sat down with them in 2010, I asked how we make this a federal issue. The bill does a good job of saying that we are going to have a national strategy. That is the federal issue hook. At the time, I was not thinking along those lines. I was thinking about how we could talk about Lyme disease through a federal lens.

We talked about Lyme disease as it relates to national parks. In the south of Nova Scotia, where the ticks have started and are moving northward, in their movement north they are travelling right through Kejimikujik National Park. Some folks have told me that there are ticks in Kejimikujik. It is a reality, yet there are no signs, no postings, and no telling people what to look for. We could fix the problem if we knew what to look for and did a tick check at the end of the day, but if people do not know, they are increasing their risk.

I wrote to the then minister of the environment, who I cannot name, but it was before Jim Prentice, so this was a while ago. I talked about the fact that the Public Health Agency of Canada had declared Lyme disease to be a reportable disease, which we have heard a few times here, and that both the Public Health Agency and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research are monitoring the prevalence and spread of the disease through the country.

I talked about the fact that Lyme disease causes a wide variety of health problems for infected individuals, that it is carried by ticks and is transmitted through biting, and that the diagnosis is on the rise, particularly in eastern Canada and in suburban areas like Bedford, Nova Scotia or in national parks.

It is so important that Canadians be made aware of whether ticks have been found in an area and whether infected ticks are in the area as well. I pointed out to the minister that it had come to my attention that Parks Canada was not making the public aware when ticks carrying Lyme disease had been discovered in our national parks.

When infected ticks are discovered, there are no warnings on the Parks Canada website. There are no signs displayed at park entrances or on trails. It needs to be addressed as soon as possible. Plans should already have been put in place. The letter actually says that it should be before the beginning of the 2011 outdoor recreation season. Here we are, and we are about to embark on the 2014 outdoor recreation season, yet still this kind of plan is not in place.

This is a good example of what a strategy can accomplish. A strategy is not necessarily that we snap our fingers and all of a sudden Lyme disease is not a problem. It is steps we can take, such as making people aware that there are infected ticks in a park and they need to do a body check at the end of the day. This is how we reduce risk. People need to understand. It is one piece that could be part of a big strategy, and that is what we are talking about. We are still waiting for the federal government to act. We are still waiting for it to take action on a strategy, including one that would include our parks.

How about some good news? The good news is that Nova Scotia is taking action. I receive updates regularly from Robert Strang, who is the Chief Public Health Officer for Nova Scotia. He sent an update

to me as an MP that said, "Hey, you and your constituents need to know this." He talked about the Department of Health and Wellness, which has a Lyme disease response plan. It includes an interdisciplinary committee that includes public health, veterinary medicine, because animals are involved too, and wild life biology, and it uses evidence-based advice and guidance. It looks at how to control Lyme disease. It sends out regular updates that include subjects such as tick and Lyme disease surveillance, public information that is available, information for clinicians, testing, and research. It is a good role model.

There are good things happening across our country. A federal strategy could wrap it up really well.

● (1840)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be speaking after my colleagues, particularly our health and environment critics. Every speech teaches us a little bit more about Lyme disease. I am pleased to also say a few words about Bill C-442, An Act respecting a Federal Framework on Lyme Disease.

I must say that this bill is of interest to me, as are so many other bills. We have heard some stories, and last February I received a letter from a constituent about this bill:

I am one of your constituents and on behalf of the thousands of Canadians suffering from Lyme disease, I am asking you to support Bill C-442 respecting a national strategy on Lyme disease. Debate on the bill begins on March 4.

Later on in the letter, she wrote:

We need to support Bill C-442 so that we can develop a national strategy to fight this serious disease.

The person who wrote me asked me to meet with her, which is what I did. The meeting was truly amazing for me. I was there with the mother of someone with Lyme disease.

She told me about the ordeal that she and her child, now an adult, had to go through before getting a diagnosis. Finally, after several years, it was discovered that this person was afflicted with this terrible disease. The child experienced a number of symptoms, got several diagnoses, and underwent numerous tests before being accurately diagnosed. Despite numerous doctors' appointments and hospital tests, they were faced with more questions than answers. Over this time, the disease took its toll, and became chronic. This person will have to live with the chronic symptoms of Lyme disease.

Finally, thanks to a test in the United States—not in Canada—a clear diagnosis was obtained. In spite of the trials and tribulations, and an established diagnosis, the parents told me that it was actually a relief for the person with the disease to know what the diagnosis was. Indeed, once the disease becomes chronic, many of the symptoms of Lyme disease closely resemble chronic fatigue syndrome.

What happens when a person has symptoms but no clear diagnosis? Often, those afflicted get depressed because they do not know what has caused the symptoms. Their family and friends are left wondering what to do. They do not know how to help people with the fuzzy diagnosis of chronic fatigue syndrome. When a diagnosis was established in this case, the family was able to support the person with Lyme disease and at that point they could come together to develop a plan of action as to how to cope with the disease.

• (1845)

The parent in question also praised the Canadian Lyme Disease Foundation, commonly known as CanLyme. The Foundation carries out very important work to raise awareness about the symptoms, diagnoses and ways to prevent Lyme disease. CanLyme is also a not-for-profit organization, and its website contains a great deal of information dispelling a number of myths and misconceptions around the disease.

I would like to commend the foundation on its extraordinary work. I would also like to salute the courage of this parent who came to meet with me to talk about their story and the plight of their loved one with Lyme disease, who had to go through quite an ordeal before getting a diagnosis.

The bill calls on the government to develop a national strategy to combat Lyme disease. I think that the government has to understand not only the need to put a strategy in place, but also the need for resources and financial backing. Parks Canada needs tools to advise people visiting our national parks on how to recognize the infamous insect that infects people with Lyme disease and the steps they should take if they are bitten, to ensure that the illness does not become chronic.

If it can be done for poison ivy, I do not understand why it cannot be done for Lyme disease. Moreover, a national strategy would help us work together with the provinces to develop tools to prevent this disease.

It is important to understand what is happening. Why is this disease spreading? It was previously a little known disease because it did not occur in Canada, where many insects die in our frigid winters and therefore do not cause a problem. However, climate change and global warming are having an effect on us as a Nordic country.

I am an agronomist by training. I got my training not so long ago. In class, we were told that Canada needed to adapt to changes in agriculture and prevent diseases that will emerge as insects head a little further north. The government must tackle these problems head on.

That is why the An Act respecting a Federal Framework on Lyme Disease is a step in the right direction, and that is why I support it. I

Private Members' Business

also support it on behalf of a parent who came to meet me in my office to tell me about Lyme disease and make me more aware of it.

• (1850)

Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak to this bill this evening. As I also have the great privilege of sitting on the Standing Committee on Health, I was able to hear the witnesses and experts discuss the bill when it was referred to the committee and to learn about the improvements that we could make to strengthen it. I also saw that the government had a certain agenda.

At the Standing Committee on Health, we essentially sat down together around the table and agreed that this bill should go forward. Obviously, it cannot necessarily be perfect for everyone, although the NDP will support it. There is a consensus in the Parliament of Canada in 2014 that this bill on Lyme disease is to be taken more seriously.

As many NDP colleagues have mentioned, the tick that carries Lyme disease has been moving northward for many years as a result of global warming. Now we must find ways to protect the people living in southern Canada, and increasingly those further north as well, from this tick, which can have a disastrous impact on people's lives.

Before discussing the more technical aspect of the subject, I feel that the people who are listening to us at home may not know what Lyme disease is. We talk about a tick, an insect. They may not understand.

My speech this evening will focus essentially on what Lyme disease is and what the tick is. Then I will talk about ways to prevent the disease. I will also talk about my region, Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean.

I got lucky last week. An excellent journalist from my hometown, Patricia Rainville, published a very good article on Lyme disease in the local newspaper, *Le Quotidien*. It will be a pleasure for me to read certain interesting excerpts from it.

The disease was discovered in 1977 in the U.S. town of Lyme, Connecticut, where several children were suffering from arthritis. The disease then gradually spread northward. Cases have been recorded in Quebec since 2011, but numbers have skyrocketed since 2013.

Therefore, we can see that the problem will only get worse for the people of Quebec and of Canada. That is why this is the ideal opportunity for the Parliament of Canada to move forward with a bill on the subject.

Once the tick attaches itself to the skin, it can stay there for approximately 72 hours if it is not detected. Seventy-two hours is the length of time it needs to feed, and during that period it can transmit the bacterium that causes Lyme disease.

A person bitten by a tick carrying the bacterium that causes Lyme disease will develop in the first few weeks a red rash more than 5 cm in diameter around the site of the bite. At that point, the disease can easily be treated with antibiotics. If nothing is done in the following weeks, however, the individual may suffer paralysis, swelling of the limbs, heart palpitations, headaches and even meningitis.

Private Members' Business

Clearly, the tick that carries Lyme disease can have a serious impact on human health. This is why people ideally should try to avoid being bitten by this tick, which could transmit the disease. To prevent infection, it is recommended that people apply mosquito repellent and wear long clothing and closed footwear before entering high-risk areas. Taking a shower and examining one's body in the two or three hours following exposure is another excellent suggestion.

This is important, particularly since the tick is more likely to be found in wooded areas. Hunters are obviously at risk when they spend long hours in the woods, which is why many hunters have caught Lyme disease.

Ticks infected with Lyme disease have not yet settled in the Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean region, which is a good thing for us. Only one case was reported in the hospitals back home last year, but the disease had not been contracted in my region, thank God. There were no cases of Lyme disease in Quebec five years ago, but the blacklegged tick has come a long way since then.

● (1855)

Today, there are a number of cases of infection in Montérégie. Entomologist Robert Loiselle, whom I greatly admire and know personally, is urging the public to be on the lookout:

I have been talking about this for 15 years. The blacklegged tick was well established in the northern United States, but for the past few years we have been seeing more and more of them in southern Quebec, in Montérégie for example. Tourists who come to enjoy nature have to be extra careful and check themselves after a hike or a walk.

At the Agence régionale de la santé et des services sociaux, spokesperson Éric Émond confirmed that a case of Lyme disease had been reported at a hospital in Lac-Saint-Jean last summer, but the bacteria was not contracted here. This year, as I said, no cases have been reported. Obviously, we never know what will happen if we are not careful.

The Quebec ministry of health and social services is asking the public to be careful. Dr. Danielle Auger, director of public health said:

For the past few years in Quebec, we have observed an increase in the number of ticks carrying the bacteria responsible for Lyme disease. The disease can be contracted from a tick bite during activities in wooded areas, including in higher risk areas in southern Quebec, such as the northern eastern townships, southwestern Mauricie-et-Centre-du-Québec and especially Montérégie, where the majority of cases contracted in Quebec have been reported to date.

According to entomologist Robert Loiselle, it is highly likely that the blacklegged tick could end up in my region:

I recently caught a tick, but upon analysis, it was not carrying Lyme disease. Nevertheless, ticks follow the deer populations. It is therefore not outside the realm of possibility that ticks will show up one day.

I do not want to sound overly dramatic, but even my region, in northeastern Quebec, is not safe from Lyme disease. This is a growing problem, but it is also a national problem. Earlier my colleagues from British Columbia and Nova Scotia discussed the situation in their part of the country. People and health authorities are on alert and are turning to the federal government, as are patients and their families, in the hope that it will do something.

That is truly unfortunate because the Conservative government has put nothing forward for years. The NDP has been proactive in

this matter since 2008. NDP member Judy Wasylycia-Leis strongly recommended in 2008 that the minister of health implement a national strategy for the diagnosis, treatment and better monitoring of Lyme disease. Yes, the NDP has been talking about it and making it a priority since 2008. The Conservative government, on the other hand, has been dragging its feet for years. That is why I am grateful that my colleague has introduced this bill. At last we can move forward in 2014.

The official opposition health critic has always recommended that such a strategy be adopted, and she supported Bill C-442 when it was introduced. That is an indication of the NDP's good faith.

The requested strategy should have been adopted long ago. Canadians deserve proper tests and care. The onus is on the federal government to improve monitoring of Lyme disease and to establish best practices so that the provinces can understand the disease and adopt more effective evidence-based measures.

Over the years, the Conservatives have taken no initiatives on important health issues such as the coordination of services provided for chronic and complex health problems and funding for innovative screening and treatment measures. The matter before us is one in which the federal government should show leadership in health care and strive to better protect Canadians.

Many patients in Canada report problems with screening and treatment for Lyme disease. The various blood tests conducted to detect the disease often yield inaccurate results. Patients who have Lyme disease may not be diagnosed with it or may be incorrectly diagnosed with multiple sclerosis or chronic fatigue syndrome. Consequently they do not receive necessary care and, as a result, their symptoms worsen. It is important that we move forward to help these patients.

● (1900)

[English]

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians need a national strategy on Lyme disease to ensure that testing and treatment options in Canada are improved.

The New Democratic Party of Canada supports Bill C-442 and congratulates the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands on her initiative.

This legislation lays out a concise plan for educating Canadians about disease risks and most important, provides a better quality of life for Lyme disease sufferers.

Lyme disease is caused by contact with the bacterium spread by tick bites. Ticks are small parasites that feed on the blood of animals and humans, and they pass on Lyme disease when they feed on mice, squirrels, birds, or other animals that carry the bacterium, and then bite humans. Ticks are more common during the warmer months from spring through to late autumn. Canadians who live in areas with mild winter temperatures and minimal snowfall have an increased risk of coming into contact with ticks.

Climate change is one of the factors causing more regions to be at risk, with warmer weather increasing tick distribution across many parts of Canada.

Bill C-442 is especially important to British Columbian coastal communities, as Lyme disease is currently more of a concern on Canada's west coast due to its mild temperatures.

Lyme disease symptoms can include a circular rash around the bite, fatigue, fever, headache, weakness, abnormal heartbeat, muscle and joint pain, and central and peripheral nervous system disorders. Symptoms get progressively worse if the disease is left untreated, which it is for many Canadians. Chronic Lyme can develop if the disease is left untreated and can have lasting effects for months or years afterwards, and according to Health Canada, can result in recurring arthritis and neurological problems.

In 2008, NDP MP Judy Wasylycia-Leis urged the health minister to implement a national strategy to diagnose, treat, and create better surveillance of Lyme disease. I am proud of the member for Vancouver East, our official opposition health critic, who has continued to call for a national Lyme disease strategy since that time and seconded Bill C-442 when it was introduced by the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

This strategy is long overdue. Canadians deserve to get adequate testing and treatment for this disease. The federal government is responsible for improving the surveillance of Lyme disease as well as establishing best practices so that the provinces can understand the disease and adopt evidence-based measures that improve outcomes.

The bottom line is that receiving early and appropriate treatment would improve the quality of life for thousands of Canadians and their families. Early treatment of Lyme disease reduces the severity and duration of illness. More accurate testing and earlier treatment of Lyme disease would reduce the health care costs associated with a lengthy illness and more severe side effects, particularly for women who suffer long-lasting side effects when their Lyme disease goes untreated.

The New Democrats have been working with Canadians in support of a national strategy on Lyme disease for years now. Now is the time for the federal government to adopt such a strategy to protect the health and safety of Canadians in the face of this rapidly spreading disease.

I urge all members to support the bill.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am deeply indebted to all members on all sides of the House. I will not need my five minutes, as I do not plan on making a long statement.

I want to close at this third reading of Bill C-442 by turning our attention to the people who are suffering with Lyme disease. I want to thank Jim Wilson and the Canadian Lyme Disease Foundation, Brenda Sterling in Nova Scotia, who first made me aware of the disease through her own suffering, and my dear friends and the family of Fraser Smith. I particularly want to thank Nicole Bottles for her amazing advocacy, struggling herself against the debilitating effects of the disease.

Government Orders

I want to thank members on all sides of the House. We have done something good today for people who need our help.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

• (1905)

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): As we have completed private members' business, the House will suspend until 7:09 p.m.

(The sitting of the House was suspended at 7:05 p.m.)

SITTING RESUMED

(The House resumed at 7:09 p.m.)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

ECONOMIC ACTION PLAN 2014 ACT, NO. 1

Hon. Rob Nicholson (for the Minister of Finance) moved that Bill C-31, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on February 11, 2014 and other measures, be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Andrew Saxton (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour today to speak to Bill C-31 at third reading.

This act sets out a comprehensive agenda to create jobs, keep the economy growing, and return to balanced budgets.

With economic action plan 2014, the government continues to support families and communities by keeping taxes low, putting consumers first, protecting Canadians' health and safety, and making communities more resilient in the face of natural disasters.

During the next 20 minutes I would like to talk about our economic and fiscal strengths and our plan to ensure we remain a world leader in a relatively uncertain global economy. The opposition may not find this to be the world's most exciting story. After all, it is a story about low taxes, fiscal discipline, and long-term thinking. Canada's story in recent years shows a country that is getting back to work and in which businesses, families, and communities are in an enviable position to succeed moving forward.

Government Orders

Let me begin with this. Canada's fiscal fundamentals are solid and sustainable. Our government has ensured that Canada was always in a better position to weather the economic storm. For eight consecutive years, our government has demonstrated steadfast leadership and an unprecedented commitment to the Canadian economy.

In 2006, when our government assumed office, the world was a different place. Markets were booming and economic growth was strong. Even back then, the economic storm clouds were gathering. Our government's focus on sound fundamentals meant that we were ready when those storms reached our shores. We paid down the federal debt, we cut taxes for families and job-creating businesses, and we set out an ambitious plan to renew Canada's aging infrastructure.

In 2009, when we reached the depths of the great recession, our government acted quickly, decisively, and better than most. We introduced an economic action plan that funded thousands of critical infrastructure projects, including the construction of roads, bridges, and border crossings, as well as knowledge-based infrastructure like research labs, universities and colleges, and broadband Internet access in rural areas.

Fast-forward to today and we can see that those actions are paying off. Since coming to office, our government has had the best job creation record in the G7. We are leading in economic growth. We have created almost 20% more jobs on a per capita basis than our closest competitor. Canadian households have seen a near 10% increase in their after-tax inflation-adjusted incomes under our government and an almost 45% increase in their net worth. Canada has the lowest total government net debt burden of any G7 country by far.

Both the International Monetary Fund and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development expect Canada to be among the strongest-growing economies in the G7 over this year and next.

• (1910)

[*Translation*]

Government of Canada bonds are among the most sought-after investment tools in the world. That means that investors both here and abroad have confidence in our government's ability to manage the economy, today and in the future.

While it is gratifying to highlight Canada's economic strengths, we know we must remain vigilant. Today's advantage will not carry into tomorrow simply by sheer luck or even good intentions. By making considered economic choices, Canada is doing relatively well where other countries are on shaky ground.

[*English*]

However, we cannot be complacent. That is why we will continue to deliver on our commitment to Canadians while keeping taxes low. After all, when Canadians elected our Conservative government, they were clear. They cannot afford to pay the higher taxes that the Liberals and the NDP want to force upon them.

Unfortunately, both the NDP and the Liberal leader have recently committed to raising taxes, thereby stunting Canada's economic

growth. Those taxes would prevent businesses from expanding and block them from hiring workers. Small businesses cannot afford these higher-tax policies. In fact, families in my riding of North Vancouver, and across Canada, tell me that they cannot afford the NDP's irresponsible pension proposals either. They cannot afford a smaller paycheck, nor can they afford to lose their jobs.

In an all too volatile global economy, there is no substitute for decisive actions and hard work.

There remain risks from beyond our borders, which bring with them the potential for severe consequences on the Canadian economy. The result is that our economy has been restrained by weak export markets and declines in commodity prices. In addition, financial market vulnerabilities in some emerging economies could translate into weaker than expected growth in these countries and increase financial market volatility more generally.

The message is clear. Competing in such an uncertain world means sticking to proven strategies and continuing with plans that work. Fortunately, Canada has just such a plan: economic action plan 2014. Today's legislation would build upon previous actions by our government to create jobs, growth, and long-term prosperity for Canadians.

First, as members well know, a growing part of Canada's economic strength comes from our rich natural resources. These sectors create jobs and prosperity, particularly in many rural communities across the country. Canada's natural resources sector represents 18% of the economy and over half of our exports, and supports 1.8 million jobs directly and indirectly. Furthermore, it generates about \$30 billion annually in revenue to governments, equal to approximately half of all spending on hospitals in Canada in 2013.

There are hundreds of natural resource projects under way or planned in Canada over the next 10 years, representing a total potential investment of over \$650 billion.

A significant element of this economic boost is represented by Canada's unique oil sands industry. This sector is an asset that will increasingly contribute to the prosperity of all Canadians. The oil sands is among the world's largest technology projects, contributing about 275,000 jobs across Canada and \$48 billion in GDP. These numbers could grow to an average of 630,000 jobs and a contribution of \$113 billion in GDP per year, up to 2035.

Government Orders

• (1915)

[*Translation*]

Canada's natural resources have always been a factor in our success, but never as much as today. Major economic projects create jobs and stimulate development everywhere in Canada. The reason is growing global demand for resources, in particular in the emerging economies. As part of Canada's economic action plan, we are modernizing the federal regulatory regime by establishing clear deadlines, reducing overlap and the burden of remuneration, and by focusing resources on the big projects that have the most positive environmental impact.

[*English*]

For example, we are implementing system-wide improvements to achieve the goal of one project, one review within clearly defined time periods.

In our most recent budget, we announced \$28 million, over two years, to the National Energy Board, for the comprehensive and timely reviews of applications to support the participant funding program and eliminated tariffs on mobile offshore drilling units used in offshore oil and gas exploration and development.

To help improve offshore energy developments, today's legislation would amend the customs tariff to eliminate tariffs on mobile offshore drilling units used in offshore oil and gas exploration and development. By making the status of the drilling units duty free, it would help improve the global competitiveness of Canadian energy projects and increase the potential for valuable resource discoveries in Canada's Atlantic and Arctic offshore areas.

We also announced an extension of the mineral exploration tax credit until 2015. This credit helps junior exploration companies raise capital by providing an incentive to individuals who invest in flow-through shares issued to finance mineral exploration. Since 2006, this measure has helped junior mining companies raise over \$5 billion for exploration. In 2012, over 350 companies issued flow-through shares with the benefit of the credit to more than 30,000 individual investors.

Our government remains committed to making Canada a great place in which to invest and expand a business and for hiring new workers. Economic success, however, requires more than simply being blessed with an abundance of natural resources. It requires ensuring our greatest resource, our people, have everything they need to excel. That is why our government has consistently focused on training the workforce for tomorrow.

Students participating in Canada's education system are the largest source of new labour market supply. Providing them with the right skills is essential to further Canada's economic prospects. Employers and various organizations have identified an acute need for skilled tradespeople. Employer surveys indicate that skilled trades are among the most difficult jobs to fill. In fact, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce lists skill shortages as the number one barrier to Canada's competitiveness. As the baby boom generation retires, demand for skilled tradespeople, and apprentices in particular, is going to increase. While the number of apprentices completing training and obtaining certification has doubled from 2000 to 2011, apprenticeship completion rates have averaged only about 50% over

the same period. That number is low compared to other countries and substantially lower than that of community college and university students.

In Canada, apprentices and skilled trades do most of their learning during on-the-job paid employment and participate in technical training for periods of time ranging from six to eight weeks each year. They can face significant costs to complete these periods of technical training required by their program including educational fees, tools and equipment, living expenses, and forgone wages. That is why to help connect Canadians with available jobs, Bill C-31 introduces a new Canada apprentice loan. This initiative would help apprentices registered in Red Seal trades by providing access to over \$100 million in interest-free loans each year to complete their training.

• (1920)

[*Translation*]

Perhaps the most important aspect of the efforts made by our government to match Canadians with the jobs offered is the Canada job grant. That program is going to transform job training, to ensure that federal funding meets the workforce needs of employers and enables them to participate as full partners in the job training system.

The Canada job grant provides up to \$15,000 per person for training costs, including tuition and materials, which includes a maximum federal contribution of \$10,000, with employers funding, on average, one third of the total training costs.

The government held exhaustive consultations with employers and other stakeholders on the design of the grant, which reflects the results of those consultations. It is important to note that in recognition of the special challenges facing small businesses, they will be allowed greater flexibility in the cost agreements.

[*English*]

At the same time, to foster job creation, our government is renegotiating the \$1.95 billion per year labour market development agreements to better reorient training toward labour market demand. EAP would also invest \$11 million over two years, and \$3.5 million per year ongoing, to strengthen the labour market opinion process to ensure Canadians are given the first chance at available jobs.

The bill provides \$14 million over two years and \$4.7 million per year ongoing toward the successful implementation of an expression of interest economic immigration system to support Canada's labour market needs.

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By investing in the skills of Canadians and the resources of our country, we are acting to ensure Canada's long-term prosperity.

Finally, today's legislation builds on our government's actions to support and improve the quality of life for hard-working Canadian families.

[Translation]

Our Conservative government is the only party that has a record of proven successes in supporting families and communities. The opposition does nothing but vote against these supports. We are working hard to create economic benefits for all Canadians, so they can enjoy a good quality of life and long-term prosperity. We have reduced federal taxes to their lowest level in 50 years, and we are going to look at other ways of providing tax relief for Canadians, while at the same time aiming to return to balanced budgets by 2015.

[English]

Since 2006, our government has lowered taxes in a number of ways for families, including increasing the amount of income all Canadians can earn without paying any federal income tax; increasing the upper limit of the two lowest personal income tax brackets so that individuals can earn more income before being subject to higher taxes; reducing the lowest personal income tax rate to 15% from 16%; and introducing the TSFA, the tax-free savings account, to help Canadians save by earning tax-free investment income.

Our tax cuts have also given individuals and families the flexibility to make the choices that are right for them. Even the Parliamentary Budget Officer confirmed that our government has provided significant tax relief for Canadians, benefiting low- to middle-income families the most. He says:

Cumulative tax changes since 2005 have been progressive overall and most greatly impact low-middle income earners (households earning between \$12,200 and \$23,300), effectively resulting in a 4% increase in after-tax income.... In total, cumulative changes have reduced federal tax revenue by \$30 billion, or 12 per cent.

That is what leadership is. It is simply not possible to tax and spend our way to prosperity. As a result of actions taken by our Conservative government, the average family of four will save nearly \$3,400 in taxes this year, and the net worth of families is up over 44%, with *The New York Times* saying we have the most affluent middle class in the world for the first time ever.

While we are focused on creating savings for Canadians, the leader of the Liberals has the same old Liberal high-tax, high-spending agenda that would threaten jobs and set working families back. How can someone who thinks budgets balance themselves be trusted with jobs and the economy? At the same time, the leader of the NDP continues to push risky, high-tax schemes, like the \$20-billion carbon tax, that would hurt Canada's economy and kill Canadian jobs.

An hon. member: That was \$22 billion.

Mr. Andrew Saxton: Mr. Speaker, my colleague says it is an increase of \$22 billion.

Our government's ambitious agenda for tax relief for families, individuals, and businesses is aimed at creating a tax system that

fuels job creation and growth in the economy and allows Canadians to keep more of their hard-earned money.

Specifically, today's legislation proposes to increase the maximum amount of the adoption expense tax credit to \$15,000 to help make adoption more affordable for Canadian families.

The bill would introduce a search and rescue volunteers tax credit for search and rescue volunteers who perform at least 200 hours of service in a year, something I know will be very welcome in my riding of North Vancouver.

We are also encouraging competition and lowering prices in the telecommunications market by capping wholesale domestic wireless roaming rates to prevent wireless providers from charging other companies, which may be their competitors, more than they charge their own customers for mobile voice data and text services.

To conclude, in this rapidly changing world, helping Canadians and businesses is a fundamental part of everything our government does. It is why, despite ongoing global economic challenges, Canadians can count on our Conservative government. We remain committed to providing the strong leadership Canadians expect.

• (1925)

The role of government is to put in place the right balance of policies and initiatives to support growth and unleash potential, and that is exactly what we are doing through this legislation. I therefore encourage all members of this House to give this bill the support it deserves.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened with some amusement to my friend's speech, because so little did he reference the bill in front of us. However, this is the way of talking points from the Prime Minister's Office.

A question about the bill and the legislation before us may be pertinent, and so I will try one.

This is an omnibus piece of legislation of over 360 pages. It would affect more than 60 Canadian laws all in one bill, which is something the Conservatives, when in opposition, used to decry and sing to the heavens about, saying how unfair and unjust it was. However, it is something they have taken up and put on steroids.

Buried within the omnibus bill is a tax treaty, an intergovernmental agreement with the United States, our largest trading partner, on a piece of legislation that was pushed through Washington, much to everyone's disdain and anger. It is called FATCA. It would be used to try to grab money from Americans living overseas.

Government Orders

Now Canada is obviously not a tax haven, and the Americans admit that, but lo and behold, Canada has to do something about this. What the government has done is shield the banks from any expenditures. The banks estimate that a single bank would need \$100 million to go ahead and collect all this information about Canadians, dual citizen Canadian Americans living in Canada. In fact, there may be up to one million people.

My simple question to my friend is this: has the government estimated the cost? The banks are saying that it is \$100 million per chartered bank. Now that the Government of Canada is going to collect this information and pass it on to the IRS, has it estimated the cost to the Canadian taxpayer of collecting all this data on behalf of the IRS?

Mr. Andrew Saxton: Mr. Speaker, in fact, this has raised some concerns in Canada, and that is why we undertook to negotiate with the United States to improve it. The agreement we reached, after a long period of discussion, addresses those concerns by relying on the existing framework under the Canada-U.S. tax treaty.

CRA will not assist the IRS in collecting U.S. taxes, and no new taxes will be imposed on Canadians. In our negotiations, we obtained a number of concessions, including exempting certain accounts, such as RRSPs, RDSPs, TFSAs, et cetera.

I would remind my colleague opposite that without an agreement in place, our financial institutions would still have to comply with FATCA. In fact, it would have been much more onerous. FATCA would be unilaterally and automatically imposed on Canadian financial institutions by the U.S. as of July 1. These obligations would have forced Canadian financial institutions to choose between entering into an agreement with the IRS that would require them to report directly to the IRS on accounts held by U.S. residents and U.S. citizens, which would raise concerns about consistency with Canadian privacy laws, or being subject to a 30% FATCA withholding tax on U.S. source payments for not complying with FATCA. With our agreement in place, this will not happen.

● (1930)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member went to great lengths to explain how well the Conservative government has been doing in terms of its budgetary policies. I want to highlight two areas in which the government has been deemed somewhat a failure.

One issue is the temporary foreign worker program, which has had a profound negative impact on tens of thousands of Canadians from all regions of our country. The government has created a crisis within that program.

Second is the infrastructure program. The government is saying, on the one hand, that it is making record commitments to the infrastructure program, yet in this fiscal year, it is cutting back something in the neighbourhood of 80% to 90% of actual dollars being spent.

Many would argue that the government is putting election politics for the next fiscal year ahead of the needs of our communities throughout Canada. I wonder if the parliamentary secretary would provide comment as to why it is the government has done such a poor job on two key elements of the budget this year.

Mr. Andrew Saxton: Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the House that it was the Liberal Party, when it was in power, that brought in the temporary foreign worker program. Yes, the program had problems, which is why we have set about fixing those problems.

Our government has been clear that Canadians must have the first chance at available jobs. We have repeatedly warned employers that the temporary foreign worker program must only be used as a last and limited resort when Canadians are not available.

Despite our actions in recent weeks, there remain serious concerns regarding use of the temporary foreign worker program, especially in the food services sector. Abuse of the temporary foreign worker program will not be tolerated by our government. Allegations of misuse will continue to be investigated, and any employer found to have violated the rules will face serious consequences. Those employers who are found to have lied about their efforts to hire Canadians could face potential criminal prosecution, with sanctions that include fines and jail time.

Our government will continue to pursue significant reforms to the temporary foreign worker program to ensure that employers make greater efforts to recruit and train Canadians first and that it is only used as a last and limited resort when Canadians are not available.

Ms. Lois Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague spoke a little bit about the tax credit for search and rescue. I know that he lives in Vancouver, so he is right next to the ocean. I wonder if he could talk a little bit more about how that tax credit would be of assistance to the people living in his riding.

Mr. Andrew Saxton: Mr. Speaker, she is absolutely right. It is a very important measure that would benefit those men and women across the country who volunteer to help save the lives of other people. They put their own lives at risk every day to help save the lives of other people, and they should be recognized for that.

I can tell members that in my riding of North Vancouver, North Shore Rescue has done an amazing job over the last number of years. They have saved over 2,000 people in the last 25 years who were at risk of losing their lives in the mountains or on the shores of North Vancouver. This tax credit would help people who risk their lives, including the volunteers of North Shore Rescue and other rescue operations across the country, by allowing them to have a tax credit they can write off if they dedicate 200 hours or more each year in service to help others.

● (1935)

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, here are some numbers that are actually factual about the government's term since 2006. When it came into office, Canada's national debt was about \$480 billion. Today it is \$620 billion. One-fifth of the total debt of Canada was accumulated in the last seven years under the Conservative government. We know that the unemployment figures are high. We know that there have been seven successive deficit budgets, and we know that there has been a massive slash of services to Canadians.

Government Orders

I want to focus on the comments by my hon. colleague from Vancouver. He talked about a tax credit for search and rescue. This is the place where the government closed the Kitsilano Coast Guard station. In Vancouver and on the B.C. coast, people's lives and health are now in danger because the government cannot even see fit to fund search and rescue operations.

However, my question is about FATCA. We have a million Canadians in this country who have to now report their own personal financial information, which will go to the U.S. government, and they are subject to fines and penalties because they now have to file taxes there. These are people who have lived in Canada for 50 or 60 years, and they just happen to have American citizenship by birth.

Can the member tell the million Canadians with dual citizenship that they will not be subject to fines and penalties for not complying with filing U.S. tax returns when they did not feel that they had to do that?

Mr. Andrew Saxton: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member mentioned a couple of things. First of all, with regard to debt, I remind the hon. member that Canada has the lowest debt-to-GDP of any country in the G7 by far, and we are well on track to bring it down to the level the Prime Minister said it would come down to by 2020, which is 25%. We are currently at about 32%. That compares to the next-lowest country, which is Germany, at 54%. The numbers speak for themselves. Canada is in very good shape with respect to our trading partners and to other G7 countries.

With regard to FATCA, I remind the member opposite that this was not our law. It was a law that was passed by the U.S. Congress. It is a law that would have come into effect no matter what we did here in Canada, and it would have been extremely onerous to our financial institutions, as well as to Canadians holding dual U.S. and Canadian citizenship. Thanks to the efforts of my late colleague, Minister Jim Flaherty, we were able to achieve a significant compromise with the U.S. government. We were allowed to get provisions that would not have existed otherwise that will significantly lessen the burden on Canadian financial institutions and on Canadians holding dual citizenship.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, New Democrats like this work thing, staying here late, working on budgets, working on bills, and trying to do the good work of Canadians.

I will refer my comments to my Conservative colleagues along the way, and hopefully there will be some good give and take in the questions and answers.

What we are debating here tonight here is Bill C-31. This is the debate that ought to be occurring, as opposed to what just happened in the speech from my friend across the way, which was all about fun things he wanted to talk about, some of it slightly based on fact but most of it based on spin from the Prime Minister's Office.

Bill C-31 is an omnibus bill of some 360 pages. I have to give some credit to the Conservatives for providing a lot of important education to Canadians on parliamentary procedure, such as prorogation and omnibus legislation. Many Canadians did not have any idea of what they were until the Conservatives started to abuse their power, and now they know what they are. For that bit of

education about our parliamentary system, I thank the Conservatives. For the abuse of their power, I certainly do not.

In these 360 pages that affect more than 60 laws on the books in Canada, the Conservatives have buried all sorts of things that they hoped would not see the light of day. If they did, the tradition and pattern of the Conservative government would have been to lift them out and make them their own standing bit of legislation. They would have been elevated, with champagne and balloons and all sorts of good fun. However, they did not want Canadians to know about them.

Let us put to rest the idea that anything involved in the process of passing this bill has been anything short of a farce. The Conservatives are ramming through this legislation. Of course, like almost all legislation introduced by the government, it was put under what they called time allocation. That was another bit of education for Canadians on parliamentary tricks and tactics promoted by the government.

What time allocation does is shut down debate at every single stage. It closes off the number of MPs who can speak and it closes off the amount of scrutiny that we can apply to a very complicated piece of legislation. Many aspects of this legislation will affect the day-to-day lives of Canadians and the strength and veracity of our economy.

The Conservatives consistently put politics ahead of policy. They simply say that because they wish it so, so shall it be. What we see in this omnibus bill are fixes to the last omnibus bill, because they got it wrong. In that one there were fixes to the previous omnibus bill, because they got it wrong there too.

Why did Conservatives get it all wrong? It was because they did not listen. They have this incapacity to listen. I understand why they do not listen to the official opposition: it is because we have a naturally contrarian approach to what goes on in the House. It is quid pro quo, which is fine, but they not listen to experts either. They do not listen to academics or people in the business community. They do not listen to anybody.

That level of arrogance has been on a noticeable increase, much like the unemployment rate in Canada. That level of arrogance has grown steadily, just as the debt has grown under the Conservatives, with more than \$140 billion tacked on for future generations to pay off.

When \$140 billion is borrowed, \$140 billion is not paid back. Anybody who has ever borrowed any kind of money at all knows that the amount paid back at the end of day, with interest and time, is much more than what was borrowed.

The Conservatives always talk about their care and concern for future generations. I remember the 2008 budget that was referred to earlier by my friend, and I love Conservative revisionist history. They are able to look back on things that happened and are in the record, in black and white, and then pretend them away if they do not like what they see.

Government Orders

The budget brought in by the Conservatives, right in the teeth of a global recession, was not a stimulus budget or a budget to help put Canadians back to work; it was an austerity budget. If I remember properly—and I do, because I was in the House and looked across as the Conservatives brought their budget in—it was meant to cut programs and services. The budget was meant to deprive the economy of tens and hundreds of millions of dollars on the very cusp of a global downturn.

Why did the Conservatives reverse their position? It was not because they had any enlightenment as to how the economy actually works; it was because their own jobs were threatened with defeat.

● (1940)

As we will remember, right about that same time there was the threat of a coalition government. The Conservative government panicked, prorogued Parliament, and shut things down. Can anyone imagine this happening in other countries, by the way? There are some countries that come to mind, but none that we would ever want to imitate, not at all.

However, the government, about to face a vote of defeat, turned to the Queen's representative and said, "Let us get out of town, because we don't want to fall to the majority of MPs in the House." That conversation is an entire speech.

As late finance minister Jim Flaherty joked, he said, "We're all Keynesians now." Suddenly the Conservatives got religion on the idea that government has some role to play in the economy. Rather than doing what was suggested by all the experts, which is to directly infuse money into the economy in places where it would work, they instead invented all sorts of programs and the economic action plan. We still see the annoying ads and the billboards for them all over the place.

These measures cost tens of millions of dollars to roll out. They could instead have done something like an enhancement of the gas tax, which would have gone directly to municipalities that had projects ready to come off the shelf and onto the market. It took an extra year and a half for that money to actually touch the Canadian economy, thereby increasing the pain and suffering of those who had lost their jobs.

Even when Conservatives figured out that Keynesian economics is not the devil's work and even though they realized, finally, under threat of failure of their own government, that there was an important conversation to be had, they failed to do it properly and ended up spending tens of millions more than was required. That money was completely wasted.

Let us get back to Bill C-31.

As I raise points of criticism tonight, I would like my Conservative colleagues to acknowledge, and Canadians who are watching to realize, that despite all the criticisms New Democrats have raised, we did not just oppose what the government was doing. We actually brought forward proposals and amendments. We suggested changes to the bill that were based on the evidence we heard at committee. We did not hear a lot because, again, the Conservatives shut down the process and limited the number of voices that could be heard.

We were passing amendments to Canadian law. In the final stages of this bill, we were changing law every two minutes. This is what the Conservatives call oversight and accountability. They were making significant changes to Canadian law without any understanding of the repercussions and without bringing forward any witnesses.

Regardless, we brought substantive amendments. We brought even more at the previous stage of this bill that we are now debating tonight. Every single time—with one small exception, which was when I worked with my friend across the way for a technical fix on the bill—they were refused. Even when the evidence was overwhelmingly strong that the government had got it wrong and that the impacts were going to be disastrous for Canadians, Conservatives stubbornly refused.

We tried to be reasonable with them. The amendments were completely founded on the consensus we got from the witnesses, who understood many of these issues far better than any parliamentarian involved, and arrogantly and consistently the Conservatives refused every single one. We introduced nearly a thousand amendments on omnibus legislation, and the government was consistent in refusing all of them. What is ironic is that the fixes that are now in this omnibus bill to fix the last one were changes we attempted to make during that process and that debate, and Conservatives said no, no. They said they had it right.

Let us get into the actual details of the bill. I want to touch on one point that my friend raised earlier, the \$14 million a year that is going to the NEB that is going to help with participation for Canadians. There are some tens of billions worth of projects on the docket as potential development projects, and the Conservatives offer up \$14 million and want to slap themselves on the back.

Here is what they have actually done to environmental assessments in this country, according to the Auditor General. They can dispute the Auditor General if they so wish. By gutting the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, they have taken the average number of environmental assessments from 4,000 per year down to between 12 and 15 per year. These assessments are the public hearings on mines, new major builds, pipelines, and all the rest at which companies are forced to bring their science forward, their evidence and facts, and community members raise concerns. That is the process they engage in.

We are going to go, on average, from 4,000 of those assessments in Canada per year down to between 12 and 15 per year. I am not saying 12,000 or 15,000, but 12 or 15. All the other projects are simply going to get rubber-stamped and approved by the government with no public input, no hearings, no evidence, no science, none of it. One would think that a resource-based country like Canada would have learned from past mistakes. That is why we have the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act.

Government Orders

Last year the federal government and all federal taxpayers put \$160 million into Yukon alone to deal with old, abandoned mines that are leaking because they were built badly. What we said was, “When you get things wrong in resource development, it’s expensive.” It is not just expensive for the environment; it is also expensive for taxpayers. Therefore, let us get smart. Let us evolve. Let us understand the impacts as well as we can before we build the project, rather than have to pay and clean up the mistakes afterwards.

● (1945)

Conservatives like to turn back the clock, as they so often do. They have been watching too many reruns of *Leave it to Beaver* to realize that the world has moved on. What the world has realized is that science is important. However, time and time again we see the government purposely make itself ignorant. I do not know if we have ever before seen a government of a G7 country that says it would rather not know much about the economy. The government cut 20% from the labour market assessment, so 20% of that budget is gone. It does not want to know what is going on in the labour market, but what it will do is bring in temporary foreign workers for any problem it perceives or for any anecdote it has from an employer.

Of course, that program has absolutely exploded. That program is addressed in the bill. That is one of the laws that is addressed in the bill. Here was a missed opportunity by the Conservatives to fix the obvious and known problems with the temporary foreign worker program. Did they do it? Not at all.

They are caught in a bit of a dichotomy here, because they keep saying that the program is fine, that it is strong, that they are hard on employers and have a blacklist they put them on. Oh, the terrifying blacklist. After two years, there are two employers nominally on the blacklist. One might think there have not been any abuses, but in Alberta alone last year, 160 cases of abuse of the temporary foreign worker program were raised. That is just one province. Obviously, the abuses are there.

There was an opportunity for a fix here, an opportunity for the government to pull back and close those massive loopholes that one could drive a pickup truck through. The Conservatives obviously got the temporary foreign worker program badly wrong.

The effect is not just the abuse on those temporary foreign workers. We in the NDP believe that if someone is good enough to come to Canada and work in Canada, they are good enough to eventually become a Canadian, as opposed to the indentured labour program that the Conservatives set up. Rather than fix those programs, they chose not to. It was another opportunity the government missed.

There was a program that was ragingly successful for small businesses, the true job creators in our country. Depending on the year, eight or nine out of every 10 new jobs in Canada are created by small and medium-sized businesses. These businesses are the ones that drive the economy, drive innovation, and absolutely support communities and families.

The Conservatives did something smart: they borrowed an idea from the NDP. They said if they were going to offer a tax cut to small businesses, which is a good thing, it should be connected to a job being created. I know it is a radical suggestion to say that if we give

a tax break or a benefit of some kind to someone, they should give something back. The NDP said that was a good line to connect, that taxpayers would support that idea. Lo and behold, even the Conservatives supported it. It was the small business hiring tax credit, which half a million small businesses supported and applied to. It created those jobs that we so desperately need. With such a successful program, what did the Conservatives do? They cancelled it.

What was it the Prime Minister said today? He said it was a time-limited offer. He’s the ShamWow prime minister now. It is time limited only. Here is this very effective small business program, but it is time limited. “Call now. We’ll throw in a set of knives for you if you hurry.”

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business decried this cancellation. The Canadian Chamber of Commerce said it was wrong. Small business operators across the country asked why, if the government had a program that worked, would it cancel it?

Here is something the Conservatives did not cancel that we have seen over time: the massive shifting of tax away from corporations, particularly the largest and most profitable. This tradition was started by the Liberals, to be fair, but it was continued with great vigour by the Conservatives. Tens of billions of dollars in tax breaks were given to corporations with no strings attached. The Conservatives, and previously the Liberals, said, “Just take the money, and we hope you’ll do some great investment in research and development and create those jobs and invest back.”

What has happened? It turned into dead money, as former finance minister Jim Flaherty put it. Almost half a trillion dollars are sitting in the coffers of corporate Canada that they are not reinvesting and not putting into R and D and not using to create those jobs. Why is that? It is because there are no strings attached. That is how it works in life; so too does it in business. If we give someone something for free, they will take it gladly. If we include some implication, some sort of contract attached to getting a break from the taxpayers of Canada, then they can be expected to create a job with that break, as opposed to what these guys have done.

● (1950)

Getting back to this participation thing, the Conservatives have created massive uncertainty when it comes to resource development in Canada. We see it through the fiasco of the Enbridge northern gateway proposal, where they retroactively changed the law that governed the NEB, taking the decision away from the independent panel that they always talked about as an independent tribunal, saying that they were going to let do what it does. Then why did they, in an omnibus bill, retroactively change the process while we were halfway through it to take the decision away from the NEB and land it in the lap of the Prime Minister, who within seven days, is going to make a decision on this?

Government Orders

Gosh darn it, he is caught between a rock and a hard place, because they would not listen to the economics of exporting raw bitumen to China being a bad idea for the value-added chain in Canada; that this is a non-renewable resource that we get once. They would not listen to the environmental implications; they accepted a project without admitting whether bitumen, this thing that comes out of the oil sands, sinks or floats. Now why would that be important? Well, we could ask the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment. He would know, because whether it sinks or floats affects how the cleanup operation would be designed. If it sinks, boy that would sure be hard to clean up. Lo and behold, two days after the NEB sent in the report, without knowing the answer to that fundamental question, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans had in fact done a study on bitumen in water in a tank here in Ottawa, and it sent the report in two days after the panel had reviewed the project and said, "Goodness, let us just go ahead and give it the green light." Now the Prime Minister has a week to make up his mind. He has not listened to the economics.

He has not listened to the environmental concerns of putting supertankers on B.C.'s north coast, which as anyone who has been there knows, is fraught with peril. It is the place I represent and know well. There is going to be a massive accident if this goes ahead.

Now they are listening to the politics. The 21 B.C. Conservative MPs are suddenly faced with a bit of a dilemma: who are they going to listen to? Are they going to listen to the voters who put them here, or are they going to listen to the Prime Minister who has had blinkers over his eyes since day one on this project? It was his government that said that anybody who raises concerns about this pipeline must be a foreign-funded radical, an enemy of the state. What do people think the effect was in British Columbia for those who were raising legitimate concerns about this project? They were offended and maybe saddened to see a Prime Minister use this kind of rhetoric against his own people: enemy of the state—how dare he?

What they did ultimately, as we are now seeing, was react in the way we would expect Canadians to react to a bully. They stood up, are standing up, and are standing shoulder to shoulder with first nations and non-first nations allies, community to community, and the town of Kitimat itself passed a plebiscite vote rejecting this project, yet the Prime Minister will not listen to any of that.

The Conservatives ignored the Canadian chambers of commerce on the trademark provisions that were in this bill. There were also the intellectual property components; and FATCA, on which my friend from Victoria has done amazing work, exposing this travesty that over a million Canadians may be exposed to the IRS because the Canada Revenue Agency is going to play some sort of middleman role and pass on the private banking information of up to a million Canadians. Here is who are affected: Canadians of dual citizenship, who are Canadian, by the way. The minister was in committee time and again and said no Canadian would be affected. Is a dual citizen between Canada and the U.S. not a Canadian? Are individuals who were born in the U.S. but have lived almost their entire lives here, with Canadian citizenship and voting in Canadian elections, not Canadians? The mayor in one of my towns is affected by this. Are those not Canadians? The minister, bold-faced, stood in front of the committee and said no one would be affected. One of the amendments we put forward was to at least give people notice

when passing their personal banking information on to the IRS, and the Conservatives rejected that too. This is a bad bill; it has all sorts of consequences for Canadians.

Therefore, I move:

That the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word "That" and substituting the following:

this House decline to give third reading to Bill C-31, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on February 11, 2014 and other measures, because it:

- a) has not received adequate study or amendment by Parliament;
- b) cancels the hiring credit for small business;
- c) raises costs for Canadian businesses through changes to trademark law that have been opposed by dozens of chambers of commerce, businesses, and legal experts;
- d) hands over private financial information of hundreds of thousands of Canadians to the US Internal Revenue Service under Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act;
- e) undermines the independence of 11 federal administrative tribunals; and
- f) fails to fully compensate for years of unjust clawback to the benefits of Canada's disabled veterans.

If for no other reason, the Conservatives should show a little spine and stand up for Canada's wounded vets and support this motion.

• (1955)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The amendment is in order. Consequently, the subsequent debate will be on the amendment itself.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques.

• (2000)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Skeena—Bulkley Valley for his truly passionate remarks. I know that he survived the ordeal of the Standing Committee on Finance, and the frustration felt by committee members at having to sift through a budget bill that covers so much ground. The member for South Shore—St. Margaret's agrees with me because he was there too.

To give you a sense of the complexity of what we were dealing with—and we had very little time to do so—one specific issue took up 50 pages of the bill. I am referring to the substantive amendments to the Trademark Act. We had a moment to take a superficial look at the issue. This fact was decried by all the witnesses who appeared and in the various briefs heard on the subject, starting with the one from the Canadian Chamber of Commerce.

I would like to hear the member's comments, first regarding the fact that this was buried in such an immense bill—and therefore the issue could not be addressed appropriately—and second, regarding the changes that these amendments will bring that may hurt Canadian businesses and the economy.

Government Orders

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my esteemed colleague for his question and also for his work. His dedication and efforts to fight the government's measures are incredible.

The issue of trademarks is very interesting and highly complex. The problem is that the various chambers of commerce share the same opinions. It is either all black or all white. This is very interesting. It is not the first time, but it is very rare that chambers of commerce use their power, and connections with other chambers of commerce across Canada, to move against a bill. They are calling on the Conservatives to explain why they are doing this, given that the impacts on innovation, new technologies and businesses are very serious. The Conservative government says that it does not agree. This is an incredible moment in time.

A business group makes a statement like that, and the Conservatives completely ignore the facts and the data. Now, that is interesting. Hating business groups is something new for the Conservatives. When the Conservatives have a bad plan, they plough ahead with it regardless of the cost. That is a problem, and demonstrates just how incredibly arrogant they are.

[English]

Mr. Mike Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to go back to a couple of comments we heard in part of the amendment that the member proposed, which is associated with the veterans side of it. I have a couple of comments that were made by the Veterans Ombudsman, Guy Parent, during the testimony we had. He talked about the difference between the retroactivity of the previous system and going on to this right now. He also said:

...Veterans Affairs Canada was operating within the full context of the legislation. When confronted with a new understanding of the disability pension, a policy change was made to amend the regulation to eliminate the harsh effect that this policy was having on veterans.

From an ombudsman's perspective, there is nothing unfair about what has occurred.

He then went on to say:

You can see that the population affected here is more than just the new veterans clients. We're talking about the war veterans allowance clients as well. So we're talking about going back 40 or 50 years.

With regard to fairness, we think the government acted fairly.

Does the hon. member agree with that?

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, here is who I agree with: the veterans who came and testified in front of the committee, like Sean Bruyey, who very bravely continues to advocate for veterans, even after his mental health records were given to the public by the Conservatives. How is that for standing up for veterans?

Mr. Gerald Keddy: Come on.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives can contest it all they all want, but this is a known fact. The same Veterans Ombudsman, whom my friend quotes, is the one who cited this breach of confidentiality for Mr. Bruyey.

Mr. Gerald Keddy: Just make it up.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives can yell all they want, but these facts are on the record. They absolutely did this

to a serving vet, to someone who had suffered greatly on behalf of Canada.

We asked a government policy person who came to the briefing that night why the decision was made not to go back to 2006 when this clawback was first initiated. Again, this is a clawback from disabled and injured vets. Rather than start it in 2012, why did the government not go back to 2006? What is the policy basis for this? He said it was a political decision.

Now, the current government has spent tens of millions of dollars in court fighting veterans on this very issue. That is absolutely a fact. The government spent taxpayer money fighting Canadian veterans. However, for the compensation to go back to 2006 would have cost about the equivalent of what the Conservatives have spent in court fighting disabled vets. That is the fact; that is the reality.

The ombudsman was correct in his interpretation of the law; in terms of justice for our vets, we will listen to the veterans every single time.

● (2005)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, certain industries in Canada, in all regions, have been hit quite hard by the current government's budgetary policies. One of them is the manufacturing industry, and we only have to look at the province of Ontario where literally hundreds of thousands of jobs within the manufacturing industry have been hit, and hit very hard.

A good part of that deals with the issue of trade, where we have seen the government slip annually in terms of the amount the trade deficit has grown under this administration. Trade ultimately leads to tens of thousands of potential job opportunities, which have been lost.

I wonder if my colleague might want to provide some comment regarding the benefits of trade. I am not talking about any specific trade agreement, but trade overall. Can the member comment on how trade is in the best interest of Canada, and how the Conservatives have not been able to get to the bigger picture on the issue of trade and the importance it has in creating jobs?

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, it is a connected piece and another missed opportunity. I wish the government had taken a Hippocratic oath before it designed this bill, to do no harm.

One of the things the Conservatives have done—I think it was inadvertent, because I do not think they actually understood the consequences—is that they have mashed together a bunch of independent tribunals, such as the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal and the Canadian International Trade Tribunal. They combined all the budgets into one, and then reduced it.

We heard from the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, and this was testimony that the Conservatives decided to ignore. However, the testimony from one of the largest business groups in Canada said that getting through the trade tribunal would be more difficult, thereby limiting Canada's ability to trade. This is not from New Democrats. This is from the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters. These are folks who deal with the trade tribunal and deal with trying to get trade deals across the board.

Government Orders

These are not the fake, so-so FIPA trade deals over which the Conservatives make great fanfare and never bring to the House. They never sign them and never ratify them, but they are very important. An example is the one they did with Europe all that time ago. Apparently, it is all done; they just have to put a couple of dots down and the thing is finished, yet it is not here, it does not exist, and the Europeans are talking about these important things that they cannot quite get done.

We had a specific motion that we moved to say, if we want to help out Canadian manufacturers and exporters, then do not do this to the trade tribunal; do not mash it together with these other ones and then reduce the budget.

What did the Conservatives do? They said they did not care, and they voted against the amendment. They said to let the manufacturers deal with their reality, because that is the reality the Conservatives want. That is what they said to the manufacturers of this country.

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to thank my hon. colleague from Skeena—Bulkley Valley for his excellent and passionate presentation today, exposing Bill C-31, the budget implementation act, for what it is.

In particular, I was here when the member asked a question of the parliamentary secretary concerning FATCA and the compliance cost of it. He pointed out that it was \$100 million that one bank would have to spend in order to come into compliance with it. He mused about what the cost would be for the government to bring this into line, but he got absolutely no answer.

I wonder if the member could comment on what this lack of understanding says about the fiscal management style and relevance of the Conservatives.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, there go those penny pinching Conservatives again. They sign a major tax treaty with the United States without understanding the costs, even while they knew the charter banks had talked about the capacity to accumulate all this data. For one bank it was \$100 million. The Canadian government, when asked, said no, that it did not do an estimate and it did not know the costs. That was at the briefings as well.

We know the Privacy Commissioner has looked at this and is deeply concerned. We know constitutional experts have looked at this and have said that this is likely going to head to a charter challenge. Again, the Conservatives who have such a wretched record with presenting laws that are able to survive a constitutional challenge, have once again brought in a bill with eyes wide open. They said that this was likely to hit a constitutional challenge, likely to get undone by the high court in Canada and they introduced it anyway.

The Conservatives are going to ram it through and they will all vote for it happily because the Prime Minister told them to do so. Why not listen to the evidence for once? Why not protect those million Canadians who are going to have their private banking information passed on to the IRS in Washington without them even being notified? Why not stand up for Canada just this once?

● (2010)

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak today to Bill C-31. I would like to split my time with the member, my colleague from Bourassa.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please. In order to split time during the first round, the hon. member needs the unanimous consent of the House to do so. Does the House agree that he can split his time?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The hon. member for Kings—Hants.

Hon. Scott Brison: Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by setting the table a bit in terms of the budget discussion we are having right now and draw to my colleague's attention the May 3 edition of *The Economist* magazine article on the Canadian economy, which states:

Maple, resting on laurels

Canada has not learned every crisis lesson...

[Canada's] post-crisis glow is fading.

It credits Canada's success in coming through the downturn better than other countries to three factors: first, a strong banking system, which accredits the previous Liberal government for having maintained a strong prudential regulatory framework and not following the U.S. and European models of deregulation; second, the strong fiscal situation that the current government inherited, the best fiscal situation of any incoming government in the history of the country; and, third, oil and gas and minerals that we have under the ground and off the shore of Newfoundland. I think most of us realize that no single government or party is responsible for putting the oil and gas under the ground and we all know that it is Danny Williams who put it under the water off Newfoundland.

Given the fact that the government cannot necessarily take credit for all the success in coming through the downturn, it is important, though, the government recognize that things are not going so well right now. Hence, *The Economist* saying that Canada's post-crisis glow is fading. It actually cites the reality that our economy is growing more slowly than the U.S., the U.K., and Australia. It speaks to the IMF projecting growth will be around 2% this year, which is very anemic. Our employment rate is still below pre-crisis levels and Canada ranks fifth in the G7 for job creation since 2008. That is in *The Economist* magazine.

Just to set the table, it is important that all parties realize that we have our work cut out for us and the economy is not growing as quickly as that of many of our peer countries within not just the G7 but the OECD, and there is a lot of work to be done to develop good, full-time jobs. We have lost 27,000 full-time jobs in the last year. Full-time jobs are being replaced by part-time work.

Government Orders

As I rise to speak on Bill C-31, there is nothing really in this budget implementation act to deal with some of these issues. There are a lot of other things that have nothing to do with the fiscal framework of the country at all. I would like to go back to the days when budget bills were actually about the budget and were actually written by the Department of Finance as opposed to all these other departments and agencies which have only a peripheral connection to budget issues.

The Conservatives have taken to cramming their budget bills full of measures that simply do not belong in them. This year's omnibus bill includes changes to trademark law, rail safety, designations of rank at the Department of National Defence, the virtual museum of Canada, administrative tribunals, and the number of federal judges. It is a bit of a dog's breakfast in a kitchen sink bill. These measures simply have no business being in a budget bill.

It does not make any sense for the finance committee to be tasked with examining rail safety issues. In fact, it should be the transport committee that not only evaluates these measures, but ultimately votes on them at the committee.

To make matters worse, the Conservatives have introduced a lot of these changes without public consultation. They jam a bill to the point of bursting, ram it through Parliament, ignore public consultations, basically avoid real debate and also miss the opportunity for proper scrutiny. Hence, there are measures in this budget implementation act to correct mistakes in previous budget implementation acts.

In terms of trademarks, three weeks ago the Canadian Chamber of Commerce issued a call to action to their members in response to the trademark provisions of Bill C-31. Canadian entrepreneurs, who are the real job creators of our country, are concerned that Bill C-31 would remove the requirement to use a trademark before it could be registered.

● (2015)

We have heard from chambers across the country, from Surrey, Burnaby, Kamloops, Leduc, Winnipeg, Sudbury, Sarnia, Oakville, Milton, Newmarket, Richmond Hill, East Kawartha, Haliburton Highlands, Northumberland, Fredericton, Gander, Beaverton, Winkler and the Northwest Territories. These chambers of commerce have contacted us to say that Bill C-31 and these changes to the trademark provisions will increase the cost of doing business in Canada and will make Canada a less competitive country.

They are concerned that Bill C-31 will lead to trademark trolls and greater levels of litigation. They ask that the trademark provision of the bill be removed. They take great exception to the fact that they have not been consulted by the government.

We have heard from specific companies, including Giant Tiger, Sobeys, Credit Union Central of Canada and PepsiCo. These businesses that operate in Canada and employ a lot of Canadians are offering their valuable advice and professional expertise on an issue with which they have great familiarity.

However, instead of listening, the Conservatives have basically ignored their concerns and dismissed them out of hand. In fact, at the finance committee the Conservatives attacked the credibility of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce. They actually questioned the

chamber's true motives and suggested it was just self-interested lawyers who wanted to maximize fees, not employers who wanted to grow the economy and hire more Canadians.

There has been a lot of discussion on FATCA. Members of the business community are not the only ones who are being squeezed by Bill C-31. Canada-U.S. dual citizens are left out in the cold. The minister and even some finance officials could not actually answer the question of how many Canadians would be affected. The reality is that it is about a million Canadians who are caught in this dragnet.

Bill C-31 includes the intergovernmental agreement, or the IGA with the U.S., to implement FATCA. This should not be in a budget bill; it should be before the justice committee. There are strong foreign policy implications and issues of extraterritoriality. The agreement reached by the government is flawed. There are a lot of Canadians living in Canada with a connection to the U.S. They do not even know they are considered by the IRS to be taxable as Americans, in many cases.

The list includes persons born in the U.S. or born to an American parent, even if they have never lived in the U.S. While there are some exemptions for Canadian banks in terms of reporting, there are no exemptions for the Canadian citizens who happen to, in some cases almost by accident, be considered American taxpayers under this legislation.

One of the concerns that we have is that registered programs, for instance registered disability savings plans and registered education savings plans, these types of programs into which the Canadian government contributes matching grants to the investments made by Canadian citizens and taxpayers, those matching grants, we were told at committee and it was confirmed, will actually be considered taxable income by the IRS.

The intention, of course, of those matching grants by the Canadian taxpayer is to help young Canadians get an education or to help disabled Canadians benefit. It is not to effectively subsidize the U.S. Treasury.

These are some of the challenges in this legislation. Unfortunately with an omnibus bill, we have not been given the opportunity as parliamentarians to do our jobs properly and, at the appropriate committee, to scrutinize this massive, complex and unwieldy omnibus legislation by the Conservative government.

● (2020)

Mr. Mike Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague talked about the testimony that we received at committee with respect to the accounts under the IGA that are going to be excluded from the actual reporting to the CRA and then to the IRS. There is a significant number of them.

Government Orders

We also heard testimony in committee that their taxation of those was going to be conditional. They would not be taxed on the way in, but on the way out, just like they are in Canada. It was stated to us in committee that it was going to be on the way out, not the government contribution on the way in. One can imagine an education savings plan, for example, being used by a low-tax individual. The chances of that being taxable or creating any tax on it in the U.S. is virtually zero.

The hon. member is mixing up a lot of the IGA with tax filings. U.S. citizens have had to file, or are supposed to have filed, since 1913. FATCA came about in 2010. Does the member remember the testimony in committee that it is actually going to be taxable on the way out, so it might not necessarily even apply?

Hon. Scott Brison: Mr. Speaker, as my colleague from the finance committee has confirmed, earnings based on the matching grants provided by the government will be taxable income under the IRS. It is absolutely perverse that the Canadian government is putting in these funds to benefit Canadian families. Ultimately, earnings on these funds, these matching grants, will be funnelled through to the IRS and the U.S. Department of the Treasury—

Mr. Mike Allen: No.

Hon. Scott Brison: Mr. Speaker, he actually just said it. He said that, in fact, earnings on these matching grants will be considered taxable income in the U.S., and he is right.

He spoke of an exemption. He is half right. There is an exemption for Canadian banks under FATCA, but there is no exemption for Canadian citizens under FATCA. Regarding these registered plans, for which there ought to have been an overall exemption for Canadian citizens because of the matching grants, the government did not negotiate a good deal in Washington.

In the same way that the government lacks the capacity to get a pipeline built in the U.S., because of the lack of relationships with the Obama administration, it failed to defend Canadian interests in terms of FATCA.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to my colleague's speech, especially the part about trademarks. For two and a half years I was a member of the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology that studied intellectual property and trademarks extensively.

Like my colleague, I was extremely surprised to see that a large part of the budget implementation bill concerned trademarks. The bill should have been split.

I would like the member to further comment on the impact that implementing Bill C-31 will have on Canada's economy.

Hon. Scott Brison: Mr. Speaker, I very much appreciate my colleague's question.

Chambers of commerce across Canada have opposed on many occasions the changes to trademarks proposed in this bill. It is absolute rubbish that such changes are included in a budget implementation bill.

These changes should be studied by the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology. The member is right when she

says that this is not appropriate. The chambers of commerce find it ridiculous that the government is including these very significant changes in this bill, because they will reduce the competitiveness of Canadian businesses. This is bad for the economy.

• (2025)

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my turn to speak in the debate on Bill C-31 concerning the budget. We can say from the start that this budget will not go down in history, for a number of reasons.

First, there is nothing in this budget to help middle-class families overcome or improve difficult situations in their lives. Second, there are no possibility whatsoever of creating jobs. Ultimately, this budget does nothing to stimulate the Canadian economy. We are well aware that there will be an election in 2015. This budget is therefore a strategy that is being put forward.

An omnibus bill over 300 pages long that deals with a little of everything is a catch-all. Among the things it deals with are railway safety and the Champlain Bridge. There is a multitude of information in this bill, when we really do not have the time to debate each of its elements in depth.

I would say, however, that there are some positive points in this budget. For example, I could mention the program established for whistle-blowers, in spite of the fact that the government cannot tell us, for example, how much money that program is going to generate or how much it will cost. It also contains measures to raise the adoption tax credit and the credit for certain medical expenses, as well as lowering the GST on health services.

What I am going to focus on tonight is the government's attitude toward the confidentiality of personal information. There are two places in this bill where Canadians' privacy is attacked. To begin, my colleague has just talked about FATCA, and that is indeed the first element. The second element is the sharing of information between the Canada Revenue Agency and the police.

We will start with FATCA. We know that FATCA is an acronym that refers to an American law. An agreement that has been made with the Minister of Finance affects Canadians who are dual nationals, and that affects about a million people.

Under that agreement, Canadian banks will now give information about those people to the Canada Revenue Agency, and that agency will do the dirty work of transmitting the information to the IRS, the American counterpart of the Canada Revenue Agency. This is what was recently signed. We are truly appalled by it, because doing this kind of thing to assist the Americans is not appropriate.

The other element concerns the sharing of information with the police. Today, I put the question directly to the Minister of National Revenue, because the purpose of clause 28 of this bill is to allow any official of the Canada Revenue Agency to transmit personal and confidential information to any police force, without the taxpayers' consent. This is a frontal attack on Canadian tax confidentiality. This clause violates the right to liberty. It is going to lead to unreasonable searches. That is why we must not go ahead with clause 28.

Government Orders

In fact, the Supreme Court has already ruled on this point, in *Jarvis* and in *Ling*. Those decisions hold that once an audit becomes an investigation, in particular for tax fraud, the taxpayer's rights as guaranteed by the charter come into play. Failure to caution the taxpayer about the possible use of the information obtained in a criminal proceeding is a violation of the rights guaranteed under section 7.

● (2030)

This violates the principles prohibiting self-incrimination.

I am wondering what the Conservatives hope to change with section 28. I spent almost 20 years at the Canada Revenue Agency. As a fellow chartered professional accountant, I understand these situations. The Income Tax Act clearly sets out the circumstances under which a government official cannot obtain information. I am talking specifically about subsection 241(1), which states:

Except as authorized by this section, no official...of a government entity shall... knowingly provide, or knowingly allow to be provided, to any person any taxpayer information...

It clearly states "except", but under what circumstances? Subsection 241(3.1) stipulates that government officials can provide information if people are in danger. Subsection 241(3) stipulates that information can be provided when criminal activity is involved.

Right now, when Canada Revenue Agency auditors come across criminal information in the course of their duties, they have a duty to provide that information to special investigations through a liaison officer. That way, a clear distinction is made between the civil audit and the criminal investigation. Once the file has been sent to special investigations, investigators will meet with the taxpayer, if they decide to take the case.

However, they must first inform the taxpayer that he is under investigation since they have the authority to conduct searches. They have a lot of authority but they always require approval from a judge to exercise it. The result is that the auditors can impose civil penalties while the investigators can seek a conviction. These taxpayers could spend up to two years in prison.

To come back to the amendment to section 28, if a Canada Revenue Agency official gives information to the police and the police decides to use it to conduct a search and take things farther, can the police actually use that information if the taxpayer did not give his consent to the Canada Revenue Agency to share the information with the police? This would automatically compromise the evidence that the police could use to convict that person.

I am therefore wondering why the Conservatives want to go there. I do not understand. This is part of the Conservatives' philosophy. They have no interest in the privacy of Canadian taxpayers. Their philosophy is to move forward, regardless of the situation and without regard for people's privacy. That is not right. We need to put a stop to that. We must remove the amendment to section 28 from this bill because it puts at risk Canadian taxpayers who are in this type of situation.

● (2035)

Mr. Mike Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech and his positive comments.

[English]

I have a couple of questions I would like to ask. One is on the part that the member just talked about, which is a very narrow provision that the CRA would only report in the cases where there are reasonable grounds that there has been serious criminal activity happen and only in that case. Does he not think that it is important to ensure that we are able to cover that off?

The second question is with respect to the FATCA provisions. Given his tremendous length of experience, he would know that FATCA is a U.S. law. The U.S. is going to implement it as it has against other countries already. Is it not better to see an information exchange through CRA and the IRS that takes into account the existing privacy provisions for that information as opposed to going to FATCA anyway and the U.S. negotiating individual deals with each individual bank that could have serious problems with privacy concerns?

[Translation]

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg: Mr. Speaker, first, let us start with the last point. The member mentioned FATCA and the information exchange with the Americans. He did say "information exchange", but no provision is made for any exchange in the agreement that was signed. The Canada Revenue Agency will give the information of taxpayers who have dual citizenship to the IRS in the United States. That is not an information exchange. We do the work for the Americans. I should also mention to the honourable member that the Canada Revenue Agency already exchanges information with other countries.

Second, I understand why one would want to fight a certain number of crimes, whether it be cybercrime, drug trafficking or other crimes, given the advent of new technology. However, clause 28 is not the solution. When an auditor encounters a drug-trafficking situation, he transfers it to special investigations.

[English]

There is no need for that.

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member who just spoke. He was elected very recently, but I was very pleased to hear him say that omnibus budget bills make no sense. However, who began introducing omnibus budget bills, if not the previous government, that is to say the Liberals? It was under the Liberals that we began using this completely undemocratic and irresponsible method of governing. We will excuse him, since he was elected very recently. I am pleased that he acknowledges the problem with this kind of budget.

I would like him to speak more to the consequences this budget will have. What is missing from this budget? How could this budget create genuine economic growth or real full-time jobs? I would like him to talk about what is missing from this budget.

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

Government Orders

Once again, and I have been saying this since yesterday, what we want to do is to work for the middle class. When we consider a budget bill introduced by the Conservative government and an NDP member talks to me about what the Liberals previously did, I do not spend my time on such arguments.

As I said, this budget contains a number of promising elements. However, I do not agree with the idea of adding a number of measures that make no sense, do not create jobs and do not favour the middle class. I think we must get down to essentials. Should we join forces to combat the Conservatives' attitude or should I let the NDP select inappropriate targets instead?

● (2040)

[English]

Hon. Bal Gosal (Minister of State (Sport), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Tobique—Mactaquac.

I am happy to discuss economic action plan 2014, because I feel that it is the right budget for Canada and for Canadians. After all, Canada has the strongest job creation record among the G7 countries, with more than one million net new jobs created since the depth of the global recession. Economic action plan 2014 would continue our government's focus on creating more jobs and growing the economy even further, including in my riding of Bramalea—Gore—Malton, in Brampton, Ontario.

Economic action 2014 contains provisions that focus on putting money back into the pockets of my constituents and Canadians from coast to coast, with no new taxes on families or businesses. When I am door-knocking in my riding or visiting local businesses, keeping taxes low is a topic that comes up often. Canadians know that the Conservative Party is the party of lower taxes. It is our government that manages to save Canadians money while at the same time managing to balance the budget in the medium term. At the end of the day, that takes hard work, fiscal prudence, and a lot of planning, because unlike the leader of the Liberal Party, our government is fully aware that budgets do not magically budget themselves.

I would like to speak to a very special area of the budget that is close to my heart, which is the great investment in sport, an investment that would help our high performance athletes and individuals in our communities. I would like to focus on a proposal to invest in stronger communities by contributing an additional \$10.8 million over the next four years to support the efforts of Special Olympics Canada.

Special Olympics Canada is national in scope, with provincial organizations across the country. It provides sports training and competition opportunities for over 36,000 athletes of all ages with an intellectual disability. It has a network of more than 16,000 volunteers, including more than 12,000 trained volunteer coaches. Its vision is to continue to improve and expand the quality, opportunity, and accessibility of sports for the individuals it works with. Along with this, it strives to improve both awareness and the support of the community with regard to Special Olympics Canada and those involved with it.

In fact, here is what Sharon Bollenbach, CEO of Special Olympics Canada, had to say following the release of economic action plan 2014:

Special Olympics Canada is very pleased to be included in today's 2014 federal budget announcement. This commitment will allow Special Olympics Canada and the twelve provincial and territorial Chapters to extend our reach to even more Canadians with an intellectual disability. We are extremely grateful to the Government of Canada and thank them for their ongoing support and commitment to Special Olympics in Canada.

I am confident that we would be giving the tools to Special Olympics Canada that would allow it to support the growth and ongoing delivery of community-based programs, in particular to increase the number of registered athletes and volunteers.

There is much more. Economic action plan 2014 would see continued support for Canada's Olympic and Paralympic athletes, along with funding for organizations such as le Grand défi. I am also proud of the support our government provides to such groups as Canadian Tire Jumpstart, KidSport, and Canadian Sport for Life.

Now, as I highlight the government's ongoing record level of commitment to sport, including the continued enrichment of the lives of Canadians with an intellectual disability through sport and competition, the promotion of healthy lifestyles for Canadians, and providing amateur athletes with greater retirement savings opportunities, I would like to discuss why it is needed.

● (2045)

Sport strengthens our communities and is a powerful means of enhancing the lives of Canadians of all ages, particularly children and youth, by enabling them to become active and healthy. Sport contributes to our sense of national pride through the pursuit of excellence by our high-performance athletes. Our government is committed to encouraging healthy lifestyles for Canadians.

Meanwhile, when it comes to our high-performance athletes, income contributed to an amateur athlete trust currently does not qualify as earned income in determining an athlete's annual registered retirement savings plan contribution limit. This rule limits the amount of RRSP room available to amateur athletes to save for retirement, entailing another sacrifice for amateur athletes who delay their careers to represent Canada internationally. Economic action plan 2014 proposes to allow income contributed to an amateur athlete trust to qualify as earned income for the purpose of determining an athlete's annual RRSP contribution limit. It is just one more way our government is working to support our high-performance athletes who represent our country so well on the national and international stages.

Government Orders

Economic action plan 2014 would also help our amateur athletes because it proposes to maintain the Government of Canada's record level of investment in sport, including ongoing programming support for our Olympic, Paralympic, and Special Olympic athletes and coaches. Beginning in 2015-16, economic action plan 2014 proposes to dedicate ongoing funding of \$23 million per year for the sport support program, which goes to help Canada's national sports organizations, and in turn, our athletes. This includes \$11 million for winter sports through Own the Podium, \$6 million for team sports, \$5 million for the Canadian Paralympic Committee, and as announced on February 5, 2014, \$1 million for the Special Olympics.

I am also proud to reiterate that our government has already committed to investing up to \$500 million in the 2015 Pan American Games and Parapan American Games in the GTA. Canadian sports excellence and culture will be on display as Canada hosts up to 10,000 athletes, coaches, and officials from 41 countries for the Pan American Games in July and the Parapan American Games in August. These games will create a lasting legacy for Canada for both the athletes and their communities for years to come.

Sport contributes to the development of life skills by our children and youth and promotes healthy, active lifestyles and strong communities. For athletes with an intellectual disability, the impact is even more far-reaching. The program offered by Special Olympics Canada develops lifelong physical fitness habits and contributes to confidence, high self-esteem, and the development of other life skills.

It is my hope, going forward, that our government will continue to support Canadian athletes and our sports system and will work closely with Special Olympics Canada and le Grand défi to implement the renewed programming.

By allowing income contributed to an amateur athlete trust to qualify for the purpose of determining RRSP limits, the measure would provide more flexibility for amateur athletes to save for retirement on a tax-assisted basis and would ease their eventual integration into the workforce by deferring tax on income from their athletic endeavours.

Getting away from my discussion of sports, I want to finish my time by discussing our government's number-one priority: jobs, economic growth, and long-term prosperity.

One major component of Canada's economic success will require the successful integration of new immigrants who can meet Canada's current and future labour-market demands. Our government remains committed to transforming Canada's immigration system, making it faster, more fair and flexible, and responsive to the country's labour market. Already, under our government, the backlog of permanent resident applications has been reduced by approximately 50% since our taking office.

● (2050)

I am proud to say that since 2006, our country has welcomed an average of 254,000 newcomers each year, the highest level ever, while the demand for citizenship has increased by more than 30%. Earlier this year, our government unveiled the first comprehensive

reform to the Citizenship Act since 1977 to further improve the citizenship program.

The Speaker: I was trying to indicate the one-minute mark to the hon. member a little over a minute ago, so we will have to move on to questions and comments.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Newton—North Delta.

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was really fascinated with the tale that my colleague delivered. When I heard him talk about immigration, I began to wonder where he had been over the last number of years. Under the Conservative government, the door has been shut on family reunification, which has been turned into a lottery system; applications from skilled workers are being shredded by the hundreds and thousands; and the floodgates have been opened up to temporary foreign workers based on absolutely no reliable data, which even the government has now acknowledged. He talked about all the great jobs that have grown. From what I have seen and I experience in my riding, a lot of these jobs are temporary, short-term, part-time kinds of jobs closer to minimum wage.

What is his response to all those Canadians who have been turned away from jobs or have been fired because his government has allowed the temporary foreign worker program to balloon?

Hon. Bal Gosal: Mr. Speaker, it is quite amazing to hear the hon. member talk about immigration and jobs. Economic action plan 2014 talks about job creation, economic benefits and sports programs of which we are proud.

I was in Sochi, Russia for the Olympics this year. When the budget was announced, every athlete thanked me for doing the right thing. We increased their contributions to RRSPs because of their income trust, which is considered earned income. At the same time, the immigration system needs to be reformed and we are very proud that we made some reforms to it, such as cutting wait times by 50%. That needs to be done. In 30 years, we have allowed the highest number of immigrants into the country, and we are very proud of that.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are certain things the government could be doing that would increase economic activity and doing them would generate more wealth for our country.

Let me give a good example of where the government has really dropped the ball. That is in the area of infrastructure. If we invest in infrastructure, we help increase economic activity. There is a serious cutback of close to 90% in this budget, which will have a negative impact on economic activity. By doing that, the government is preventing things such as improving the quality of our infrastructure to decreasing the quality of living for Canadians.

Does the member not agree that with the government cuts this year, it is really putting politics ahead of the interests of communities throughout Canada by deferring spending on infrastructure to 2015, which happens to coincide with the election, instead of this year? That is putting politics ahead of our communities.

Government Orders

• (2055)

Hon. Bal Gosal: Mr. Speaker, it is very funny listening to the member talk about infrastructure when it is at the highest level under our Prime Minister and under this government. It is Liberals who are trying to criticize that instead of going after the facts. The fact is that funding for infrastructure is at the highest level. When we talk to municipalities across the country, they are happy with all the infrastructure money, all the gas money this government has transferred to them.

Instead of criticizing the infrastructure funding, the hon. member should look at the facts. The facts speak for themselves.

As I mentioned earlier, the sports funding is at the highest level. Every athlete in Sochi, Russia came and thanked us for the government's investment in sport.

Mr. Mike Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for the minister and for those in the House who may be “Hooked on Phonics”, I think I should just kind of go through the name of my riding so people can kind of get it.

It is Tobique—Mactaquac. One person told me one time it is like “toe” of a foot, “bic” like the “Bic” pen, Tobique; then Mactaquac would be like if there was a duck named Mac and someone was going to teach Mac to quack. Then we would be good to go. That is just for future reference.

[*Translation*]

I am pleased to have the opportunity to discuss Bill C-31 concerning our government's economic action plan 2014. As we know, many measures are really crucial for our economy, and that is why I support Bill C-31.

It is not possible to discuss all the clauses, but in the time I am allowed this evening I would like to talk about two things. First, I would like to address the clause that creates a stable environment in the area of income tax, and more specifically the Financial Administration Act. Second, I would like to share a few observations on the provisions concerning the implementation of the Canada—United States enhanced tax information exchange agreement.

There is a clause concerning financial administration, and more specifically the initiative that I proposed in my private member's bill, that will improve transparency when there are potential changes to our Income Tax Act.

When the Certified General Accountants Association testified before the committee, it said that clause 31 required the Minister of Finance to table a list of legislative proposals in Parliament every year. The first version of this bill proposed to include the legislative proposals announced publicly that were not enacted by Parliament since the last federal election, not all proposals.

The committee decided to amend that clause because it thought we could improve clause 31 significantly by amending it. In its initial form, the clause required that the minister report only on the tax measures proposed during the current Parliament. Accordingly, the list tabled would not include the numerous tax measures that were already in the wings before the current Parliament took office.

The committee members adopted the CGAs' recommendation, and we amended the Public Finance Act. Now, the Minister of Finance has to present cumulative reports, not just the changes since the last election.

• (2100)

[*English*]

In addition to that, it would also provide for the government a 12-month lag for a new minister, after an election, to file their first report of these unlegislated tax measures.

I want to thank my colleagues on the committee for working together to incorporate constructive suggestions from CGA-Canada to improve clause 31.

I would like to spend a little time on the enhanced Canada-U.S. tax exchange agreement and cover a number of topics under this. First is a bit of the history of where we are and how we got here, a bit of what FATCA is and what it is not, and what the repercussions would have been if we had just let FATCA happen as opposed to taking the initiative to sign an intergovernmental agreement with the U.S.

I would also like to talk a bit about the due diligence processes that are going to be in place for the banks, as well as the exceptions from reporting for the banks. I maintain that the changes and the intergovernmental agreement that we have negotiated is a good agreement to protect as many Canadians as we possibly can.

The U.S. has had a taxation on citizenship since 1913. It is one of only two countries in the world, the other being Eritrea, that has that kind of taxation. Most, like Canada, tax on residence, but the U.S. does not.

In fact, that was challenged in the early 1920s, through the Constitution, in the U.S., as being unconstitutional. That constitutional challenge was actually defeated. Here we are with U.S. citizens required to pay taxes in the U.S.

We all agree, and I do not think anybody in our committee disagrees, that FATCA is overreaching, on the part of the U.S. There is no question about it. We are left with the situation where, as a government that deals with the 28 other countries that have signed intergovernmental agreements, and there are about 33 that are actually working toward agreements in principle now, we have to learn to deal with this in order to protect as many citizens as we can.

In the discussions we had with the U.S. Treasury, this spring, in Washington, it was pretty evident that the U.S. Treasury, in spite of some of the lobbying we did, was not hearing any of it and that FATCA was still going to exist. The fact that FATCA was passed in 2010 means that is how the U.S. was going to apply that law.

With that in mind, we have a choice. Do we just let FATCA happen, as it is and as it was passed by the U.S.? Or do we try to negotiate an intergovernmental agreement in the best interests of Canadians based upon what we are going to have to deal with? Because it is a false choice to say that we can opt out of FATCA. We cannot opt out of FATCA. There is no way we can opt out of FATCA.

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If we let FATCA happen, then we are going to be faced with up to a 30% withholding tax on the transfers coming in, not only to banks, but also to individuals. As we know, there are a lot of investments that are U.S.-denominated and there is going to be a 30% withholding. As we heard in committee, that is not just a withholding tax. It is not a withholding against tax. It is a withholding tax. Essentially, there is potentially double taxation.

There are also potential privacy issues if we just let FATCA go the way it is because, then the IRS is going to negotiate individual agreements with every bank. That is what is going to have to happen, and every bank that wants to continue to do that is either going to have to suck up the 30% withholding or it is going to have to come up with an agreement to actually transfer this information to the IRS.

Also, it could get so crazy, to the point where banks would actually have to turn down clients if they ask them, "Are you a U.S. citizen?" They would have to turn them down, under the way FATCA is worded.

With the IGA and the intergovernmental agreement that we have, there is no withholding tax. The transfer of information that is going to be transferred between Canada and the U.S. will actually go through existing tax exchange agreements. It will go through the CRA, to the IRS, and it will be used very strictly within the rules and regulations of that information transfer. That is a very important concept.

Also, it would ensure that we have that privacy kept and it would also allow the banks to take on U.S. clients.

I want to talk a bit about due diligence. When we talk about due diligence, Canada did really well in the negotiations of the due diligence of this agreement because accounts under \$50,000 are not even reportable. Accounts between \$50,000 and \$1 million are done through an electronic scan. If there do not happen to be any U.S. indicia on the account, such as a U.S. tax identification number, a U.S. address, or some other U.S. identifier, then that account is not reported. All of a sudden this million people we are starting to talk about in Canada might be impacted. When we take out the underage people who might not even have a bank account, we are squeezing this down to a very small number of people. If the account is over \$1 million, then, in addition to the electronic scan, there will be a manual search in case of U.S. indicia.

I would suggest that the individuals with accounts over \$1 million do have the wherewithal, in that case, if they happen to be U.S. citizens, to deal with that and its challenges and to actually ensure that they do the proper filings. It is important to understand that those are some of the things in there. Not only that, we filtered out the RRSPs, the RESPs, and even the agriculture accounts.

Furthermore, there is a favoured nations clause in there so that if a better deal comes around, as time progresses, Canada will be able avail itself of better clauses.

● (2105)

I have heard a lot about FATCA. Most of what I have heard is that there is a lot of mix-up between the filing of taxes, which has been an obligation for U.S. citizens since 1913, and this obligation, which is on the transfer of information through the CRA to the IRS under existing processes. They are two separate things.

Furthermore, I would maintain that the deal that was signed, the intergovernmental agreement between Canada and the U.S., is the utmost best we can do from the standpoint of protecting taxpayers. We have done very well when we compare ourselves to the 28 other countries that have agreements with the U.S.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Tobique—Mactaquac for his speech. I invite him to pronounce the name of my riding in his reply.

I sit on the Standing Committee on Finance with the member, so we heard the same group of witnesses who appeared before the committee. I am going to speak to the tax agreement between the United States and Canada whose purpose was to provide an alternative to FATCA. What is clear, and I think the member can agree, given the complexity of the technical details he gave in his presentation, is that the agreement and the study of the agreement are extremely complex. This issue had to be negotiated as part of a collection of other measures that covered more than 60 acts.

He mentioned in his speech that we absolutely have to pass this treaty now and that we have no time to lose. If we look at what is going on in the United States, it is clear that the process for getting compliance is under way. Countries involved in such a process can have 18 months to comply. There was no urgent need to negotiate the treaty in an omnibus bill. There was no urgent need to address this matter and all of the related issues. There are a lot of privacy issues here. The interim privacy commissioner told us about several of those issues, and she was not the only one.

I would like to know why the government could not split the bill and remove the part about this tax treaty from the omnibus bill so that we could use our time to identify its strengths and weaknesses and deal with the privacy issues that were raised in committee.

Mr. Mike Allen: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques. I really appreciate his question. I agree that the agreement between Canada and the United States is very complex.

● (2110)

[*English*]

However, I do want to say that, with that in mind, the banks have to start collecting this information as of July 1. That is when this due diligence process has to start.

As has been pointed out, these banks will have to make investments. They will have to make investments in information technology and other processes to collect this information, which they would have to do under FATCA and will have to do under the IGA. I would argue that they will probably have to spend less money under the IGA than they would under FATCA. At the same time, it is also important to understand that they need certainty with respect to getting this started because I believe it would be very difficult to try to go back and collect that information in 2015 or 2016.

I also want to reference a comment by the interim privacy commissioner. She said:

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The risk to privacy here is therefore mainly related to over-collection, over-reporting....

To avoid over-collection and over reporting, education and outreach to institutions affected by this new reporting requirement will be crucial.

I agree. It will be important for the CRA to ensure that it communicates well and gets these structures in place with the banks before they start.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have just a quick question for the member for Tobique—Mactaquac. I want to talk about regional development because I am not sure if it was in his speech. I do not think it was. Being from Atlantic Canada, the movement of the ECBC in Cape Breton into ACOA represents a far greater change than we anticipated. I am worried that there is no focus on regional development like there was in the past. Hopefully, we are not getting away from that.

Could the hon. member address that, as far as investments go into New Brunswick and how important they have been? Would he dispute the fact that there has been less investment in economic opportunity through ACOA?

Mr. Mike Allen: Mr. Speaker, to reply directly to my colleague's question, I believe we have maintained that level of investment in positive aspects and projects in New Brunswick. I have seen them in my riding. I have also seen very much the structure with ACOA, looking at the innovation that we are doing, investing in innovation with various companies. We continue to do community projects, and we do significant numbers of projects in Newfoundland as well.

ACOA has been playing a tremendous role in our region with respect to economic development, through innovation, but also through our business development loan program, which provides businesses an opportunity to have low-interest loans, no-interest loans for a period of seven years. It is very effective in terms of access to capital.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to debate this budget bill at third reading. I also had a chance to speak at second reading and at report stage.

This bill is so huge. It is over 350 pages long and amends, repeals or adds some sixty laws. We have criticized this process many times over. However, it seems this is becoming the usual way of doing business for the Conservative government. It puts forward a series of measures, even though many of them should be studied in greater depth. I will mention several of them in my speech, as I did in my previous speeches.

This is the government's usual way of doing things, but parliamentary tradition dictates that omnibus bills have always been an exception to the rule to be used under very special circumstances. This is highly deplorable.

If we just want to cover the content, I will be able to discuss only a few of the issues. I have already talked about the creation of rules for the demutualization of mutual insurers, which will be bad for policyholders, who do not really have any rights in this process. They stand to lose a lot compared to the mutual policyholders,

whose rights are somewhat more substantial and who are the ones making this decision, motivated by greed.

When a company demutualizes, it becomes a corporation and can merge with another company or be purchased. Only a handful of people share in the profits, while hundreds of thousands of others do not and even lose some of the assets they had with that insurance policy.

As we can see from the section of the bill on the Champlain Bridge, the government wants to impose a toll on the bridge, but it is not considering the impact on traffic and Quebec's economy. The goods that move across the Champlain Bridge account for 19% to 20% of Quebec's GDP. There will be serious consequences.

For members from the Toronto area, this would be like deciding overnight to put a toll on the Don Valley Parkway because it was just paved. It makes no sense. No witnesses in committee supported the government's stance on this, yet the Conservatives are moving forward without amendment.

I also spoke about a measure that the Conservatives brought in last year on labour-sponsored venture capital funds. The bill contains more measures associated with eliminating the tax credit. I am not going to talk about these issues right away, because I would like to talk about the bigger picture of what the Conservatives have done.

I represent the beautiful riding of Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, where the economy can range from one extreme to the other, from very promising to weak. For example, Rimouski-Neigette has the Technopole Maritime.

The city created a vocation for itself with its institutions, such as the Université du Québec à Rimouski, the Rimouski CEGEP, the Institut maritime du Québec and research centres such as the Maurice Lamontagne Institute. This institute is not in my riding, but many researchers who work there live in my riding, since it is just a few kilometres away. The Maurice Lamontagne Institute is one of the main Canadian institutes specializing in oceanography and marine environments, particularly in the St. Lawrence.

All of this has helped Rimouski develop a specialty in marine research and marine biotechnology development. Many companies have moved in to take advantage of this research and momentum. Rimouski did the right thing by specializing.

However, I represent two other RCMs, the Témiscouata and Basques RCMs, which have their own challenges. With respect to per capita income, a recent report by the Institut de la statistique du Québec indicates that these two RCMs are now the poorest in Quebec.

•(2115)

It is not because of a lack of work. On the contrary, Trois-Pistoles and the superb Basques area have taken advantage of this natural beauty to develop their tourism industry.

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I can personally attest to the entrepreneurial spirit of the people of Témiscouata. When they have a business gala, it is attended by just as many businesses, people and participants as would attend such an event in the City of Rimouski, which is three times larger than the entire Témiscouata RCM.

There really is an entrepreneurial spirit, but the situation is difficult. They could use the government's support to move forward.

I spoke about the Conservative era and the fact that since the 2011 budgets, or when the Conservative government gained a majority, the complete opposite has happened. I would like to remind members that the Conservatives' slogan during the election was "Our regions in power". All the decisions concerning the regions have had negative repercussions.

The Rimouski region lost the employment insurance processing centre and the Canada Revenue Agency office. Although the Maurice-Lamontagne Institute is not in the riding, cuts there had a significant impact on the Technopole maritime, namely the closure of the ecotoxicology department and the firing of a number of scientists.

The various measures that have been taken with respect to research and development—in particular the ones that have redirected funding, in various ways, from basic research towards applied research—have had a major impact on the Technopole Maritime, ISMER and the institutional community.

There have also been cuts to employment insurance. I mentioned that Les Basques has something quite unique. The people there have developed a very professional niche tourism market. Tourism is a seasonal industry.

Témiscouata relies heavily on forestry. That is another seasonal industry. The people there also depend on tourism, which is a seasonal industry.

Those RCMs—including Neigette, the area surrounding Rimouski—still rely a great deal on agriculture, which accounts for 12% of the Lower St. Lawrence economy.

All of the measures included in the employment insurance reform have had overwhelmingly negative effects on regions such as the one where I live and that I represent, where the economy largely depends on seasonal industries.

With their budgets and economic measures, the Conservatives have impoverished regions such as the ones in eastern Quebec that I have the honour, pleasure and privilege of representing.

What is in this budget bill? Are there measures that will correct the excesses we saw in the previous budgets? Of course not.

We have a pile of bills that are combined in one document. This bill affects the appointment of judges and will add seats to the Quebec Superior Court as well as the one in Alberta. The bill also deals with the Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation, amendments to the Importation of Intoxicating Liquors Act and rail regulations. The Railway Safety Act and the Motor Vehicle Safety Act are amended by this bill.

Now, changes to regulations will no longer have to be published in the *Canada Gazette*. Why is that? It is because the government went back to consult stakeholders again, so the general public does not need to be informed of changes to the regulations. That is what we discussed at the Standing Committee on Finance.

Especially with the year we have had, it makes no sense to deal with an issue as sensitive as the Railway Safety Act and amendments to the regulations, made without transparency perhaps, and to discuss it at the Standing Committee on Finance. Is there some logic behind this? No, there is not. The government has never wanted to provide reasons to justify the use of omnibus bills.

I could talk more about 30 different divisions in part VI that pertain to about 30 different departments, not to mention all the extremely technical amendments, such as the changes to the GST, measures to counter tax evasion or all the tax measures in the bill.

This was already mentioned by my colleague from Skeena—Bulkley Valley, but I would like to point out that this is not the first time that the government has been forced to make corrections in a budget bill or that we have had to correct errors found in previous budget bills that were pushed through without amendment because the Conservatives obviously rejected all our amendments.

● (2120)

For example, this bill creates—that is how the government wants to present it—a GST exemption for hospital parking. The Conservative government was so pleased with this that it even sent out a press release stating that the government was again reducing our taxes by exempting hospital parking from the GST. Did it mention that the Conservatives had eliminated the exemption last year? Certainly not.

We have pointed out the problem with other measures in budget bills. It is the official opposition's role not only to oppose, but also to make proposals and point out flaws in bills so that the government can take note and make the necessary corrections. We are all here for all Canadians. That does not seem to be the case because, as I was saying, none of our amendments have been accepted, at least not for the four omnibus bills I have seen, with the exception of just one element in this bill. We proposed an amendment that was adopted by the Standing Committee on Finance, but even that took a Conservative amendment to the amendment. It took some doing and certainly was not easy to get adopted. It is therefore an NDP-Conservative amendment.

I wonder why we have to rush all these bills through so quickly, with all their flaws. The government systematically refuses to correct the flaws, even when tax experts and constitutional experts point them out.

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In the time I have left, I would like to address two specific issues I have not covered in previous readings. The first is a measure that affects the Trade-marks Act. I mentioned it in a question I asked my colleague. This change to the Trade-marks Act alone is 50 pages long. We had between an hour and a half and three hours to discuss this issue and 12 others at the same time. Obviously, we cannot really get into the issues in such a short amount of time. What is more, the NDP does not even get the chance to call witnesses to discuss and analyze bills and laws appropriately.

The Trade-marks Act is extremely technical and drab. I will not dwell on it, but I must say that Canada's economic sector is extremely concerned. The government is telling us that this will make us compliant with the international agreements it has concluded. However, there are a number of ways to get there, not just one. In this case, the economic community, the business community, starting with the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, is opposed to these measures.

I have here an article from *National Magazine*, which is published by the Canadian Bar Association. When representatives of the association appeared before the committee, they expressed concern about the changes to the Trade-marks Act. I will quote the article:

● (2125)

[*English*]

If anything, Bill C-31 has accomplished one impressive feat. It has provoked a virtually unanimous response by trade-mark professionals. Law firms and other professional firms across Canada have openly criticized Bill C-31's changes to the Trade-marks Act....

Why these changes have been proposed and who suggested them in the first place remain a mystery. Notwithstanding that, the bigger question is whether (and how) the government reacts to the outcry regarding Bill C-31's Trade-marks Act amendments.

[*Translation*]

The Canadian Bar Association knows that the government has not reacted at all. It rejected all of the amendments we proposed. We had a series of amendments on this particular issue.

The hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley briefly mentioned that administrative tribunals will be merged. The government wants to merge 11 administrative tribunals. It wants to merge their funding and give the Treasury Board more discretionary powers over these special tribunals. That is extremely problematic. Numerous experts who are familiar with the tribunals pointed out all of the weaknesses, problems and shortcomings that would be created if these tribunals are merged.

My colleague mentioned the Canadian International Trade Tribunal and the fact that merging this tribunal with the 10 others could create serious problems. We may also contravene the international obligations we have as a member of the World Trade Organization. That is a serious accusation, to the point where the Canadian Bar Association issued at least four warnings about Bill C-31 and addressed various components that affect the association directly or that will have an impact on the profession. The association has been very active with regard to this bill.

Cyndee Todgham Cherniak, a tax expert with the Canadian Bar Association, appeared before the committee and made a very bold statement. She said that Canada's international reputation is on the line.

Canada's international reputation is on the line because of a measure that the government is trying to pass off as purely administrative. Did the government even heed that warning? No. None of the proposed amendments were accepted.

Two of the tribunals they want to merge are the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal and the Public Servants Disclosure Protection Tribunal. These are the people who are whistle-blowers, who report wrongdoing in their workplace. These people need special protection, but that protection is being compromised because more discretionary powers will be given to the Treasury Board president. He spends a lot of time overseeing the machinery of government, and he is in a position of power with respect to various services that may have employed these whistle-blowers.

How is a whistle-blower, who is already in a pretty vulnerable position, supposed to feel comfortable going ahead, and how can he feel fully protected by a tribunal that will be merged with several others to make one single tribunal, while greater powers are being given to the Treasury Board president? This is someone who can take steps to cut back the tribunal's funding and logistics. That would give him undue influence, a fact that really worried the witnesses who appeared before the committee.

I want to say a little more about the intergovernmental agreement. I would like to thank my colleague for his remarks on the subject. I do not necessarily agree with him, but his remarks provided information, and I really appreciate that. Once again, that did not justify the need to negotiate this issue extremely quickly because there are privacy concerns. The Privacy Commissioner and other witnesses raised those concerns.

One thing to note about this tax treaty between Canada and the United States is that it is not an information exchange because the information is flowing in one direction only. It is a tax treaty designed to comply with the United States' unilateral measure, FATCA. This measure could jeopardize dual citizens holding both Canadian and American citizenship. They could be seen as Americans who would have to pay the United States a portion of everything they have ever earned, even if they have lived their whole lives or almost their whole lives in Canada, paying what are, in many cases, higher taxes in Canada.

There is something else my colleague and I have in common, since both of our ridings border Maine. In the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s, when it was much easier to cross the border, many Canadians, either from Témiscouata or New Brunswick, often gave birth in the United States and then returned to Canada. They did this because hospitals and health care were lacking. Children were therefore born in the United States, but never lived there and were immediately brought back to Canada. These people could be considered Americans and could be subject to this agreement. That is a very serious concern that has not yet been addressed. Since we had more time, it would have been good to study this provision separately and more carefully, in order to identify the weaknesses.

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• (2130)

We need to respond to FATCA and propose an agreement. We cannot accept just any agreement. We need an agreement that takes all of these concerns into consideration.

I could go on about this for hours. I will stop here, but I do want to answer questions from my colleagues and probably expand on these ideas.

[*English*]

Mr. Mike Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague a quick question about the trademark part of this. In the testimony we had, our officials from the department, who are trademark lawyers, in fact indicated that we are the 93rd country that is going through this. There has been no demonstration of any issues that have been happening so far on the trademark issue. Further, they also indicated that, under the changes that are being made, the cost of business would go down from the current application cost of \$4,000 to \$400.

Does the member not believe that would be a positive thing for business? Does he also not believe that, with those other 93 countries and ourselves on this protocol, we have done more than enough of our due diligence on this?

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, it is a very appropriate question. The question is not whether we think it is good for business; the question is whether businesses think it is good for business. They do not. I told members about the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, which is opposed.

The Conservatives were unable to actually bring a single witness from the business sector who was in agreement with these changes. They are worried about this.

I am not saying that we should not do something about our agreements. Yes, we sign international agreements, but it does not mean that this specific piece of legislation is the only one that could have been offered. There might have been different legislation or clauses that would have addressed those concerns. There was no attempt in that manner.

This is why I am saying that this specific part, which is over 50 pages long, should have been set aside and studied independently. We could have had a lot more information and many more comments from the business sector. Eventually, we might have corrected it in a way that would still have been in conformity with our international obligations.

The fact that we are presented with legislation does not mean that we need to support that specific legislation.

• (2135)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques for his speech. I definitely will not blame him for skimming through this monster bill in the little time he had, barely 20 minutes.

I am going to keep the ball rolling on trademarks. In a sham consultation, the Standing Committee on Finance instructed the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology, of which

I am a member, to examine the part respecting trademarks, among others. We obviously had too little time to do it thoroughly and of course faced criticism and in fact virtually unanimous opposition to the measures proposed by the government.

Despite that mandate given by the Standing Committee on Finance, which made no sense, we, as a committee, could not submit any recommendations without making some sort of amendment. In any case, what we proposed from our side was rejected by the government.

I would like my colleague to characterize this parody of a procedure, all these roundabout attempts to legitimize this omnibus bill, which is in fact the catch-all device the government uses to pass whatever it wants.

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, once again, the question is relevant and was in fact asked with respect to all the other omnibus budget bills.

In the case of the first omnibus bill the Conservatives brought forward, a monster bill, mammoth as it was called at the time, we initially asked the government to divide the bill so that its component parts could be studied in the relevant committees.

If we are actually addressing the Trade-marks Act—which is really a specific feature of industry—in the bill, then let us divide the bill and have that studied thoroughly by the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology. If the Standing Committee on Finance must examine a measure that adds to the number of judges or makes amendments to the operation of the Supreme Court, as we saw in the last budget bill, it is not up to the Standing Committee on Finance to study that, but rather to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. They have the expertise and deal with those questions on a daily basis. However, we wind up with it, and a succession of other elements, in the Standing Committee on Finance.

Unfortunately, as a result, the process is absolutely not rigorous. It is not as stringent as it needs to be to address the financial, economic and budgetary context for a G7 country in the 21st century.

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his exhaustive speech on this bill. I know that, given his passion and expertise, he could not have provided a mere overview.

I would like to focus on one point. I would like to thank him for mentioning demutualization. I know he brought forward amendments on this. I also know that the Conservatives' budget completely overlooks the entire co-operative and mutual sector. As the co-operatives critic, I find that worrying because it is a very important sector of our economy, particularly for the regions. It is also an important sector in the cities, but it is especially important in stimulating and revitalizing the regions.

I would like him to speak to this budget's harmful effects on the regions. Perhaps he could talk about the harmful effects of demutualization.

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• (2140)

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, the co-operatives issue is largely overlooked by the Conservatives in general. The only good measure, which is one that we requested and on which the Conservatives seemed to agree since they implemented it, was the transfer of powers or authority over the co-operatives to the Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food. For historical reasons, they were previously held by the Department of Industry.

The Department of Industry had a new tool that could have been used for economic development purposes. However, I saw nothing of it. The secretariat was eliminated at the same time as the transfer was made, or even slightly before it. It was not really abolished, but no one works there anymore. That is virtually the same thing. It was a co-operatives secretariat.

Much was made of the International Year of Co-operatives. We had some major gatherings in Quebec City. The minister went there to boast about his work. In the meantime, however, Canada was reducing the co-operatives' power and influence. Ultimately, instead of assisting them, it took away their tools. In several measures, particularly regarding the caisses populaires, tax rates were increased.

In that sense, the Conservatives give the co-operatives absolutely no support.

[*English*]

Mr. Gerald Keddy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue and for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the hon. member and this discussion on trademarks. The reality is that this would allow us to adopt the Nice classification, which would allow us to adopt the Madrid protocol and the Singapore treaty. At the end of the day, that would allow Canadian companies and individuals who are developing trademarks to list that trademark in more than one country at a time.

What is wrong with that process?

Mr. Guy Caron: I am not talking about the process, Mr. Speaker. I am talking about acceptability.

If the government actually had acted as a government should, it would have gone to businesses, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, and the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters. It would have gone to all of those groups that are worried right now about the impact it will have. Those groups have huge research abilities, and they have done research on this. The arguments the government has given them have not convinced them that it would be a good deal for them.

The government is trying to tell us that the only way to deal with those international obligations—because we signed those treaties—is by the legislation that is presented to us. That is not true. We have a piece of legislation, which can be amended in a way that would alleviate those fears and still respect our obligations.

I do not buy the argument that it is either this piece with no changes or nothing and then we would be in breach of our obligations. It does not work that way.

It is the same for the agreement with the U.S., answering to FATCA and the proposed IGA, where it has to be this way or no way. I do not buy that argument.

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out that I will be splitting my time with the member for Mississauga South.

I would like to focus tonight on three specific issues that I have been involved with in this Parliament and previous ones: number one, housing, in terms of our economic action plan; number two, skills training and, more precisely, skills shortages, the mismatch; and third, if I have time, the budget initiatives for assisting persons with disabilities and helping them find places in the Canadian workforce.

First is housing. The importance of the housing industry in this country cannot be understated. I will provide some of the facts. The first fact is that it is one of the most key economic drivers in the whole nation. It is the single biggest investment that Canadian households will ever make. It is, on average, 40% of a family's total assets or net worth. It accounts for around 20% of Canada's GDP. According to the Canadian Home Builders' Association's estimates, the total spending on residential construction and renovations is over \$120 billion annually. It provides more than 900,000 direct jobs for Canadians. Lastly, it is a fact now that Canada's housing industry is the fifth largest in the world.

Why is that significant in relation to Canada's economic action plan? It is significant because it is often said in economic circles that the health of the economy can be measured by the health of housing starts or the housing industry. We have been very fortunate over our term in government to be able to foster the conditions of a healthy platform for private market housing in this country, and we continue to do that with our economic action plan, continuing on with the first-time home buyer's tax credit, so that more Canadians can achieve the dream of home ownership.

Also, in consecutive budgets, due largely to the good work of our finance minister, we have moved to ensure accessibility and sustainability of the social housing stock in this country, providing housing for those who are most in need. In fact, we have committed \$1.25 billion in funding beginning this year to renew the investment in affordable housing for five years. We are also renewing the homelessness partnering strategy and implementing our Housing First approach to homelessness. In 2013, our government announced nearly \$600 million over five years to renew and refocus the homelessness partnering strategy using a Housing First approach, which involves giving people who are homeless a place to live and then providing them the necessary supports to sustain them in that housing.

Why is that important? It is important for us to take action for those who are truly in need in this category. What is also important is to give them a hand up to enable them to take advantage of the supports to move themselves up economically so that one day they can buy new homes.

Government Orders

Affordability is one of the largest issues in the country today. Interestingly enough, in our discussions through the Conservative housing caucus with all the sectors involved in housing across this country over the last two years, we have done a bit of analysis on how much taxation plays in the role of single family housing, multi-family housing, or any type of housing. It is quite shocking to see the graph. It is similar to what we see on the gas pumps when we put gas in our vehicles, we see the breakdown of how much the government takes through taxation for a litre of gas. In a similar nature, the housing industry, particularly the Canadian Home Builders' Association, is working on quantifying that.

It varies across the country from community to community, but what is shocking is the first drafts and first average estimates of what the taxation load is for a new homebuyer: fully 25% of the cost of that home. I believe the average cost of a home in the country now exceeds \$400,000. I think the average home price in Canada is in the \$460,000 range, and now one-quarter of that price is in direct taxation.

● (2145)

Tonight I also heard a speech by the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley. He said that our government has somehow reduced environmental regulations and protocols. I can speak to that in the housing industry. When I was in the industry for 25 years and had my own company, when we went to develop a properly zoned piece of land in our community, we would be required by the province, in my case Ontario, to do all the environmental assessment reports, send them to that ministry for evaluation, and seek approvals. The average time to get a result was three to five years. There were carrying costs of the land, let alone the taxation costs, and the development charges that went with that land.

What we have done at the federal level is this. We have reduced the duplication of those studies, because not only did we have to do it for the Province of Ontario, we had to do it for the federal ministry of natural resources as well. It did not accept the report we did for the Province of Ontario, and paid for. It demanded a different report that said the exact same things. What we have done as a government is remove the duplication. We have also put reasonable time limits on how long it should take the bureaucracy to process those applications.

Is that a bad thing for a small business like mine, which had 20 employees? No, it is a good thing, because what it does is keep people working, especially in down times. That is important to our country. There are 900,000 jobs in the construction industry on average over the years.

The opposition talks about understanding small businesses and their needs and supporting them. It should be stated that the housing industry is made up primarily of small builders across the country who build fewer than 20 houses a year. Yes, there are the big developers in the major centres and the big home building companies. We hear about them. However, more than 90% of homes in our country are built by small builders. Should our government be supporting them by reducing taxation on these small companies so that they can employ carpenters and workers, the type of people who are producing this product for Canadians, the product that counts the most? That is what our government is doing.

Let me move on to skills shortages. Where we have moved on skills shortages primarily is by providing assistance that immediately ties back to that important housing industry. It is with the apprenticeship incentive grant, the apprenticeship completion grant, the new Canada apprenticeship loan, and a host of tax credits students can take advantage of through the apprenticeship job creation tax credit. This helps to move young people into the trades and through the trades, where there are many jobs. In fact, we need to de-stigmatize the trades in our country instead of saying that every young person needs to go to university and get a university degree. That is not the case. We need to build a culture in our country that equalizes the cultural status of being a tradesperson in this country.

I am not going to get to my third point on persons with disabilities, unfortunately. However, on skills shortages, our government is working toward matching talent with task. Who better to set the task than the employer? With the Canada jobs grant, the employer and our governments, three parties, have skin in the game to bring this about.

I am pleased that I could rise tonight to talk about just a couple of the areas I am personally involved in. Our budget is delivering real, tangible results for Canadians.

● (2150)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have some good statistics to give the member.

First, one in four Canadian households spends more than 30% of its income on housing. Second, 30% of the population rents an apartment, but only 10% of new construction is in the rental market. Third, people spend 5 to 10 years on a waiting list for social housing. Lastly, rents have increased by approximately 40% over the past 20 years, while people's incomes have remained virtually the same.

Yes, the government has invested money in affordable housing, but it does not always renew social housing agreements, which could affect 600,000 households in Canada. Many people could wind up in the street. It looks as though the Conservatives' policies do not work that well.

[*English*]

Mr. Phil McColeman: Mr. Speaker, let me talk about the Conservative policy that is working, because it is working for people. I mentioned it in my speech. It is the Housing First policy to supply people who are truly in need with a level of support that puts them in a house and then creates the supports around them to enable them to rise through the economic chain.

Government Orders

My experience is in Ontario. In the mid-1990s, I headed up the Ontario Home Builders' Association, and I can tell members what drove people out of the rental housing market. It was rent control. Rent control drove them out of developing new rental housing. Any developer in the Toronto area will say that it is because the NDP government of Ontario decided to put rent controls on properties, which took the whole economic foundation out of building rental properties.

Also what is curious is that lately there are developers building rental housing. The reason they are starting to develop rental housing is that it has been a condominium-flooded market, and the developers have seen the opportunity to come back in at competitive rates, because there is the ability, with the lower taxation this government has brought about, to make that economically feasible, so there is hope.

• (2155)

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know the hon. gentleman did not get to the part of his speech about disabilities, but still I would like to ask him a question about that. Would he agree that it would be a good and useful thing for the government to revise the threshold for people having access to the disability savings plan? It is a good plan. It can be improved, like any other plan.

To get into the plan now, people first have to qualify for the disability tax credit, which means they must be fully disabled today. People diagnosed with MS, for example, a long-term debilitating condition, may not be fully disabled today, but it would be a very good idea for them to be able to save today to deal with other eventualities down the road.

Would the government consider a different threshold for the disability savings plan so that people like those long-term sufferers of MS could have access to the plan at a time when they still have earning power and can make the most of it?

Mr. Phil McColeman: Mr. Speaker, what our government has done for persons with disabilities is open opportunities for them to save, and of course, the wider we broaden that over time, the better that will be. I will not disagree with that.

However, one of the big challenges for those who have individuals with disabilities in their families is that a lot of the programs that provide the support are provincially provided. ODSP is the one in Ontario that I am thinking about. The rules and regulations around many of these conflict with the ability to save any money whatsoever. If someone has more than \$5,000 in an asset, ODSP in Ontario starts to be clawed back from that person. These have to be harmonized. This is a much more critical issue than opening the savings plan to those who have the ability to save.

Those who do not have the ability to save right now are our biggest concern. We need to provide vehicles so that they can save and are not penalized. Many of these people who also want to work are penalized by going to work because of the other supports they have.

Mrs. Stella Ambler (Mississauga South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak in support of the government's budget bill. I would first like to say a few words about

Jim Flaherty, who passed away just two months after delivering the budget.

At the very start of his budget speech on February 11, Jim quoted Canada's first budget speech from 1868. In that speech, then-minister of finance John Rose said:

....we ought to be most careful in our outlay, and consider well every shilling we expend.

It is lucky for Jim that his predecessor did not mention pennies, but I digress.

To continue, Jim Flaherty was a mentor and a boss before we became parliamentary colleagues three years ago. He was also a friend to me and my family for many years. .

Like many members of this House, I had been working toward becoming a member of Parliament for some time before finally succeeding, and like many members, I had disappointments and setbacks along the way. Jim was always there with words of support and advice. It is hard to accept that I will not be able to call on him for his thoughtful and wise point of view, but his values and personality were so strong it should be easy to guess what he would have thought about almost any problem or situation. I know that I will always try to make that guess before I make any political decision in the future.

As many noted in the days following his untimely death, Jim's last major accomplishment before leaving cabinet was presenting this budget. Probably the best known feature of budget 2014 is that it forecast a return to a balanced budget next year. That is a tremendous accomplishment, given where we were five years ago. However, the budget contains many initiatives whose benefits will stretch well beyond 2015. I would like to speak to a few of these initiatives that will benefit individuals, families, and businesses in my riding of Mississauga South.

Over my three years as the MP for Mississauga South, I have come to know my riding very well. We have beautiful residential areas, lush parks, and attractive shopping districts. We have families of every size and type. We have people from every culture and religious background. We have seniors and disabled people.

Many of my disabled constituents want to work or need to work, but everyone knows that it can be difficult for the disabled to find and keep employment. Budget 2014 has help for disabled workers. It introduces a new generation of labour market agreements for persons with disabilities. Over the next four years, the government will provide \$222 million annually through these transfers, to be matched by provinces and territories to better meet the needs of persons with disabilities and employers.

Mississauga South has a very large population of seniors. While some are happily retired, others are looking for work or are planning to return to the workforce. Budget 2014 renews and expands the targeted initiative for older workers for a three-year period, representing a federal investment of \$75 million to assist unemployed older workers.

Government Orders

Many parents in Mississauga South have children who are in university or college or who are getting ready to go. I happen to be one of them. Budget 2014 will eliminate the value of student-owned vehicles from the Canada student loan program assessment process to better reflect the needs of students who commute or work while studying.

Small and medium-sized businesses are Canada's largest employers. Job seekers in my riding will be knocking on the doors of those businesses in hopes of getting a job. However, government red tape and paperwork will make it harder for small businesses to expand and hire more people. Budget 2014 will build on the work of the Red Tape Reduction Commission by reducing the tax compliance and regulatory burden for small and medium-sized businesses.

Real estate prices have risen astronomically in the greater Toronto area over the past 30 years. When our parents and grandparents tell us what they paid for their homes in the 1960s and 1970s, we laugh. Well, they laugh, and we silently pray that we will be able to pay off our mortgages before we retire. What they paid for a bungalow or semi-detached house would barely pay for a minivan or SUV today.

The family home is a major asset for most couples, and often a heavily leveraged one. Canadians looked south with horror when the U.S. housing market collapsed five years ago. In the years since, this government has paid very close attention to ensure that Canadians are protected from such a collapse happening here.

● (2200)

While it is fun to sit around the dinner table and imagine how much our houses might be worth, those dreams must be rooted in the reality of what an actual buyer can afford in a down payment and ongoing mortgage payments. Budget 2014 includes measures to increase market discipline in residential lending and reduce taxpayer exposure to the housing sector. High mortgage payments mean that most families are taking a closer look at all of their other monthly bills.

That is why we also took steps to increase competition in the wireless sector, which has reduced wireless rates by 20%. Budget 2014 continues this commitment to keeping the cost of wireless services fair. This budget includes steps to lower wholesale roaming rates within Canada and would give the CRTC the power to impose financial penalties on companies that did not comply with the rules.

While Canadians do not envy the way their house prices fell so quickly in the United States, they do like the prices in American stores. They wonder why Canadian and American consumer goods prices remain so far apart, when the Canadian and American dollars have been so close in value. Budget 2014 also introduces legislation to prohibit unjustified cross-border price discrimination to reduce the gap between consumer prices in Canada and the United States.

I am grateful for the opportunity to speak to the budget bill. It continues the prudent management that has defined our government's economic action plan. It will bring real benefits to the constituents and communities of my riding of Mississauga South.

These benefits will help Canadians plan for a bright and secure future, a future that will be deficit free this time next year. The promise of a balanced budget is a fitting legacy of our friend Jim Flaherty, and just one of many.

I am proud to speak in its favour today and will be happy to take questions.

● (2205)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my dear colleague for her speech and especially for her kind words about our dearly departed colleague, Mr. Flaherty. Mr. Flaherty had a big heart when it came to tax credits for people with disabilities and he was very knowledgeable on the subject.

The problem with this budget, and my colleague spoke about it briefly, is housing. Right now, Canada is one of the very few OECD countries that does not have a housing policy or any appropriate budget measures to go along with it.

In my riding, people who are earning wages—actual workers—have to use the food bank; otherwise, they would not have enough money to put food on the table and pay their rent. More and more Canadians are in this situation.

It is all well and good to talk about budgets over five years for social housing and interest, but in reality, people are clearly feeling the impact of the federal government's total withdrawal from housing policy.

I would like to hear my colleague's comments on that.

[*English*]

Mrs. Stella Ambler: Mr. Speaker, I am sure the member listened to our colleague from Brant. The majority of his speech was on the topic of housing.

I do not want to repeat what our colleague said about that, but when it comes to being able to afford housing, our government has helped all Canadian families by lowering their taxes so they can afford a higher quality of life.

In fact, we have lowered taxes nearly 180 times, saving the average Canadian family \$3,400 per year in taxes. On May 27, the Parliamentary Budget Officer released an analysis which showed that since 2005, Canadians actually paid \$30 billion less in tax than they did just nine years ago. That is just under \$1,000 less for every man, woman and child in Canada.

The best thing a government can do to help families afford housing is to lower their taxes, put more money in their pockets and create that kind of prosperity for families so they can purchase a house.

Mr. Ray Boughen (Palliser, CPC): Mr. Speaker, just let me offer my service to my colleagues across the way. They are having trouble again reading this document, which reads like a good book. There are not too many big words. There are pretty small words. I used to help young people with their reading, so I could run some remedial reading classes if we could work that in.

Anyway, let me talk a little about one thing that is in the book, and it is all here. This book is divided up into chapters. It is an easy read. This is a supplemental one. I do not know how many folks may have seen this book.

Let us look at affordable housing. On page 207 and 208, we have: \$1.7 billion annually through Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation; \$1 billion in 2012, the first \$1 billion in 2011; \$1.9 billion for affordable housing for homeless, helping out with 147 households; \$303 million annually in support of first nation housing.

On page 208, we have: \$2 billion to create new and renovate existing social housing; \$2 billion for the municipal infrastructure program, which has provided 272 low-cost loans for municipalities with a housing program in place.

I respectfully submit that this is a housing philosophy and a housing policy. It is in the budget book, and many questions I have heard the hon. folks across the way ask this evening are found in this book.

It is a good read. If the members get stuck, they should give me a call.

● (2210)

The Deputy Speaker: I am afraid the member for Palliser has not only used up all the time for the question, but all the time for the answer as well. We will move on.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for York South—Weston.

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-31. It is under time allocation, so not many members of my party will be able to speak to it.

This huge omnibus bill which, according to the member for Palliser, is very easy to read, does call into question some person's ability to have basic math skills, because math skills are some of what is necessary to actually follow the money. Some of the money that is announced in this budget bill and in government's budgets is money that is old money. It was here before.

I will be splitting my time, Mr. Speaker, with the member for Beauport—Limoilou.

Like the current Ontario Conservative leader, math is not the Conservatives' strong suit.

One of the things about the bill is something called FATCA, which is a U.S. legislation that we are now imposing on Canadians. That U.S. legislation applies to Canadian citizens, according to the government, who happen to be considered American citizens by the U.S. government.

The legislation before us would require Canadian banks to disclose personal, private information to the U.S. government through the Canada Revenue Agency at some unknown cost. Again, being math challenged, the Conservatives have not figured out just how much this will cost us. The banks estimate it would have cost them \$100 million per bank to implement FATCA and now it is being passed on to the CRA. The CRA will then have to cost that out and it will be taxpayers ultimately paying that cost. However, that is not the worst part of this.

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This legislation would give the American government, through our own government, the personal, private information of Canadian citizens. We are now discovering that this has happened through the CPIC database with personal medical information being shared with the U.S. government to stop people at the border, to prevent them travelling. Do we really want to help another government to tax Canadian citizens, people born here who have never been to the United States in their lives?

Maybe the members opposite do not understand what the U.S. government has decided. It has decided that some individuals who were born in Canada and have never lived in the United States are now U.S. citizens. Those people are U.S. citizens because their parents happen to be U.S. citizens. Therefore, it is the parents of children who cause the children to be deemed to be dual citizens by the U.S. and therefore caught by FATCA. They are dual in Canada, but they are U.S. citizens under the U.S. law.

Let me tell members about a woman in Calgary whose son is caught in this dilemma. He is disabled and he has filed his U.S. taxes. His mother filed them for him. It cost his mother thousands of dollars because our government has not negotiated a tax treaty with the U.S. that allows the individuals in Canada to be treated the same under the law in Canada as they are in the U.S.

If the members opposite would stop shouting, I could actually explain this to you, Mr. Speaker.

Those individuals who have disability tax credits in Canada are not allowed that exemption in the U.S., so they have to pay taxes in the U.S., thousands of dollars of taxes. He cannot renounce his citizenship because the U.S. government will not let him.

There is laughter across the way because they do not understand this situation. The individual is mentally challenged and the U.S. government will not allow him to withdraw his U.S. citizenship—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

● (2215)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. There is just way too much noise in the chamber. If members are having difficulty listening, I suggest the members step out of the chamber. Otherwise I would ask everybody to maintain a reasonable level of decorum. I am having difficulty hearing the member for York South—Weston.

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Speaker, in this particular situation the individual in question's parents have renounced their American citizenship. They no longer have to file U.S. taxes. However, the U.S. government refuses to accept their son's renunciation, so they have to do it on his behalf because he is mentally disabled. The U.S. government has decided that he does not know what he is doing and therefore it will not accept it, so his parents must still file taxes on his behalf and pay U.S. taxes because our tax treaty with the U.S. does not cover the disability tax credit. Therefore, receiving the disability tax credit is of no benefit to this individual because he has to pay the money back to the U.S.

Government Orders

In addition, he was never in the United States in his life. He was born in Canada. His parents happen to be Canadian citizens as well but were born in the United States. The U.S. government has decided that these children are now captured by FATCA, so this individual would have his personal tax information, personal banking information, and the contents of his bank accounts reported to the U.S. for the purpose of its tax compliance, not ours.

That is a horrible example of what would happen as a result of this bill. It is a horrible example of the way the government has negotiated deals with the U.S. First it was the softwood lumber deal; it has not managed to update the tax treaty; and now it has this FATCA deal that would allow the U.S. government access to tonnes more personal information on about a million Canadians, some of whom were born here and have never lived in the U.S., but the U.S. government considers them U.S. citizens. U.S. persons, I think is its terminology. Therefore, the Conservatives opposite do not understand all the implications. Perhaps they think it is a big joke, but it is not a joke to that individual or his parents who are trying to comply with the law and who have discovered just how expensive that is, in addition to the thousands of dollars they have to pay to accountants to figure out the U.S. tax obligations.

In addition, there were a number of promises made in two budgets, both 2013 and 2014, that we have still not seen.

Seniors in my riding who do not have Internet access are still paying \$2.26 a month, and in some cases \$3.39 a month, in order to pay their bill by getting a bill in the mail. As I recall, there was considerable hoopla by the current government about how it would end that practice. It has not ended. It is not in this budget. It was not in the previous budget. It was in the budget statement, but it is not in this budget implementation bill. My riding is made up of individuals who do not have a lot of money in the first place. They do not have enough money in many cases to be able to afford the Internet, so they have to get their bill in the mail. They get their bill in the mail and have to spend an extra \$2.26. I say 26¢ because that is how much tax is paid on that extra bill that those individuals get for wanting to get their bill in the mail. The government has done nothing about that.

In addition, the former minister of finance suggested in the 2013 budget that the government would be implementing legislation that would ensure that, if it were spending federal infrastructure money on infrastructure in this country, apprenticeships would be part of that spend. That has not happened. One of the most difficult things we have not been able to sort out is that we have a skills shortage in this country, according to the minister opposite who deals with this kind of thing, yet we cannot train people because we cannot get apprenticeships for them. We cannot get apprenticeships because we are spending money and having to hire temporary foreign workers. It is a crazy system. The former finance minister got it and he suggested the solution, but nothing has been done.

• (2220)

Mr. Mike Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when I gave my comments before, I said that one of the unfortunate things about the FATCA part of it is that people are confusing the need to file a tax return in the U.S. with the requirement that we have under FATCA. The situation that the member raised, as troubling as

it is, does not change with FATCA, because that is a tax compliance issue that the individual and his family have.

If we look through FATCA, assuming that we start with a million individuals as I went through the numbers here a while ago, every account with less than \$50,000 would be non-reportable. All registered accounts would be non-reportable. Between \$50,000 and \$1 million, there would be an electronic scan. If there are no U.S. indicia, guess what? It would be non-reportable. Most people have never given that on their bank account, whether it be an address or taxpayer identification number. The only amount that we get into a real challenge with is over \$1 million, where there would have to be a manual check.

I am just encouraging the member to clarify the comments. There is a difference between the tax compliance and filing of this issue and the FATCA and, more importantly, the intergovernmental agreement that we signed to protect Canadians.

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Speaker, it would not protect Canadians' personal, private information. That is part of what we are talking about here.

I am sure there are many Canadians out there who do not understand what U.S. indicia are. I do not think it is defined anywhere in the budget document to explain exactly what U.S. indicia are.

The whole point of my comments was that there are a number of problems between this government and the U.S. government regarding tax compliance. FATCA makes it worse. FATCA would actually distribute a whole lot of information to the U.S. that the U.S. is not entitled to have.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague is absolutely right. The terms around FATCA are not defined.

The intergovernmental agreement, the so-called IGA between the U.S. and Canada, has not been ratified as a treaty by the United States. We are treating it as though we have treaty obligations. The U.S. has not ratified it. We have been warned by the leading lawyers in this country, including Professor Peter Hogg, our leading constitutional expert, that this FATCA would violate section 3 of the charter. We have been warned by Professor Christians, who is the Stikeman Chair at McGill, that this FATCA would not need to be implemented to protect our banks from U.S. retaliation, that the U.S. would not have an automatic legal right to pursue sanctions against the banks based on something that is as outrageous as the extraterritorial application of U.S. law, treating Canadians citizens now in two classes. Those two classes would be those who have some contact with the United States and those who never did.

I ask if my hon. colleague would agree with me that we will see this FATCA before the Supreme Court of Canada where, once again, one of the current administration's laws will go down to defeat.

Government Orders

● (2225)

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Speaker, yes, this is yet another bill that is likely to find its way to the Supreme Court at some point and be ruled ineffective and that it is not possible to have this bill, particularly the FATCA portion of it. That is something we face, apparently, almost on a daily basis. The government brings forward laws that are in violation of Canada's charter and Constitution and, in fact, of other laws that the government supposedly wants to uphold, like privacy laws.

We just cannot continue this way. We cannot be bringing forward laws that are not in compliance with the other laws of this country.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my esteemed colleague from York South—Weston for agreeing to share his time with me.

Once again, the Conservatives have imposed time allocation, and they should be ashamed. This move was completely arbitrary and shows disrespect for the Canadians we are here to represent.

The government is abusing its majority, and it is not shy at all about doing so, which shows its contempt not only for the legality and constitutionality of the measures set out in this omnibus bill, but also for common sense and the basic social convention of mutual respect. These values seem completely foreign to the Conservatives' way of thinking.

As the member for Beauport—Limoilou, I am going to take the time that I have been given to come back to a very specific aspect of this bill that is buried somewhere in its 350 pages. This aspect affects the Comité vigilance ferroviaire Limoilou, which is a group that was created by individuals, parents of children who attend an elementary school located just a few metres away from a major railway line that connects the Port of Québec to the rest of the province. The goods that are received at the Port of Québec are shipped to other locations across Canada and the rest of North America.

This committee was established by the people who are considered to be its spokespersons: Xavier Robidas and Sébastien Bouchard. They were very active last March. As soon as I saw the announcement about this committee starting up, I got in touch with these parents, who were legitimately worried. I would like to tell the House about the very simple objective of this watchdog committee. Members can read it for themselves on the committee's Facebook page.

It says:

The [committee] wants to ensure that rail transportation is safe, that stakeholders communicate [with the population] and that they do so with transparency.

It is very simple and is based on common sense. After the Lac-Mégantic disaster last year, this very credible and legitimate request has been voiced across North America by Canadian and U.S. citizens and even by people from other parts of the world.

With the exception of some very particular extremist elements in our society, people generally agree that we live in an environment where dangerous substances, among other things, are transported. That is part of life. It is a risk that we accept when it happens within safety parameters that allow people to be demanding, and rightly so.

We would have expected the Canadian government to do something about this fear and the legitimate desire for minimum safety standards and, above all, to ensure that information is provided so that people know what to expect with respect to the transportation of dangerous substances by rail.

Aviation fuel and a number of chemical products—not to mention solid bulk, including the famous nickel, an issue I have been working on for almost two years already—are transported through Beauport—Limoilou on the railway line monitored by the members of the Comité vigilance ferroviaire Limoilou.

● (2230)

Coal and all kinds of potentially volatile substances, such as petroleum coke, are transported as well. An awful lot of dust can get stirred up into the air and then settle in the area, contaminating the residents and nearby school grounds. There are four schools near the rail line.

This is something that we must take on and manage. My colleagues and I have a responsibility to listen to concerns, reflect on the situation and propose constructive solutions. That is not what is happening with Bill C-31.

Unfortunately, if Bill C-31 passes all the stages, the government will be able to amend and repeal numerous rail safety regulations without even notifying the public. That makes no sense because, currently, people are able to find out about any existing regulations that have been amended or eliminated, and they can do that through legitimate and perfectly transparent means. It will take a majority to support this monster bill, and the Conservatives are the only ones who would dare blindly support it.

If Bill C-31 is passed, cabinet decisions about changes to safety standards related to the rail transportation of dangerous goods will now be kept secret. I hope that some of my Conservative colleagues will wake up before it is too late.

We are familiar with the culture of secrecy that exists, particularly within the PMO, but there are limits. Considering what the people of Beauport—Limoilou are demanding, with good reason, and for that reason alone, I will be voting against this bill.

Moreover, because of these amendments, not only will citizens not be informed, but subject matter experts will not be able to provide their opinions to the minister before the amendments take effect. God knows how little anyone listens to them anyway, considering what I have seen at the Standing Committee on Finance, the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights and the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology.

In other words, the government will pass measures in the dark, the experts will then have their say, and the minister will be free to ignore them. This is a familiar refrain. I have asked questions about activities at the Port of Québec and nickel dust contamination so often that I am not really surprised that they are still doing things this way.

Government Orders

Unfortunately, despite my interest in just three or four clauses in this bill, which contains nearly 500, for the fourth time, as my colleague from Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques pointed out, the government has forced us to deal with a monster, an omnibus, a hodgepodge of different measures that have nothing to do with the Minister of Finance's mission.

Once again, the government is demonstrating its total lack of respect for all Canadians, including those who support the Conservative Party. It is imposing its will while carefully maintaining its cult of secrecy—its favourite way of doing business—and avoiding any display of the courage it takes to have a real debate.

● (2235)

I am glad I was able to once again discuss the gaps in rail safety and confirm my steadfast opposition to this government's way of doing things.

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Beauport—Limoilou for his speech, and especially for reminding us, once again, that this omnibus bill is hiding a multitude of sins. It must be acknowledged, however, that the NDP would support certain aspects of the bill, which was the case with previous bills. However, when everything is placed in an opaque envelope full of measures we oppose, it is simply not possible to vote blindly for this kind of legislation.

I mentioned that I am the critic for co-operatives. Co-operatives make a very significant contribution to the Canadian economy, especially the Quebec economy. I would like my colleague to tell us more about what is missing from the bill, and what we would like to propose in terms of creating jobs that would support the local economy.

Mr. Raymond Côté: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from LaSalle—Émard for her excellent question. I must pay tribute to her obsession with the co-operative movement, which she advocates fervently.

This brings me to another specific aspect of Bill C-31, specifically greater openness to demutualization. As a parallel with the co-operative movement, both mutual insurance companies and co-operatives, whether they be financial, labour or housing co-ops, are avenues for economic activity, job creation, and wealth creation. Mutual insurance companies are a very viable option that make it possible for people to get proper insurance and get around situations where the more traditional for-profit insurance companies often exclude them, preventing them from getting insurance.

These particularly important economic alternatives must be supported, as they make people more accountable and give them an opportunity to control their own lives.

[*English*]

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I had a conversation with my colleague earlier, during the debate, about housing.

When it comes to first-time home buyers, it seems to be that the magic is to lower taxes on a marginal level. There is more to it than that when it comes to first-time home buyers.

This bill lacks the vision to create more programs for first-time home buyers, to make it easier for them. I was one of the people who took advantage of a program, and it had very little to do with the tax rate of the day. I wonder if my colleague could comment on that, please.

● (2240)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raymond Côté: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor for his question.

I will mention the rather surprising fact that my Conservative colleagues have remained seated, with their bums glued to their seats, instead of participating in the debate. I do not know why they refuse to rise.

My colleague pointed to another important aspect: providing measures for the middle class, or for all Canadians, so that, in turn, they can improve their lot. Buying property is but one example among many others. We could also consider implementing measures to reduce banking transaction fees, which we have supported for a very long time.

There is no mention of measures to support our workers and small business owners, who currently are not being properly compensated for their efforts. This is probably the most scandalous aspect of the situation in Canada: the large number of people who are being left behind, or, in fact, middle-class Canadians, who are no longer entitled to receiving what is owed to them.

[*English*]

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to enter into the debate on these important measures.

[*Translation*]

I will begin by saying that we are proud of this government's economic record. I recently attended a conference in Europe with leaders of international companies and heads of government from the developed world. I was struck by how impressed these people were by Canada's economic record. Everyone I met said that, to them, Canada was a model for the rest of the world when it comes to prudent policies and economic growth. It is true. Here people criticize us, which is normal in a democracy. We are aware of our weaknesses and the areas we can improve on. However, sometimes we have to go overseas to see how others look at Canada, how our country is perceived internationally.

[*English*]

According to the World Bank, Canada has one of the strongest fiscal and economic frameworks in the world. The World Economic Forum has said for six straight years running that Canada has the most stable banks in the financial services sector. The OECD just today published its Canada annual country report, which was filled with praise for our country's record on a number of things, including the progress that we are making on skills development. The IMF has singled Canada out as having struck the right balance.

By the way, I was very touched by the preface in the report issued today by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, written by the director of the OECD. It was a preface of praise for our late colleague, the hon. Jim Flaherty. The head of the OECD credited Mr. Flaherty for his prudent leadership and strong fiscal management. I mention that at the outset to say that we are, indeed, regarded around the world as something of a model.

There remain challenges. While we have seen the creation of some 1.1 million net new jobs since the height of the global economic downturn, while we have seen relatively strong economic growth, while we are on the cusp of a balanced federal budget, while federal taxes are at their lowest level as a share of our gross domestic product since 1965, while we have all of these things, the truth is that there remain challenges. For me, one of the great challenges is what I call the skills gap, the skills mismatch.

It is interesting that in the report issued by the OECD today, it confirmed what this government and I have long said, which is that while there may not be general labour shortages in the Canadian economy, there are clearly sectoral and regional skills shortages. None of us should put our heads in the sand about that. Every major business organization in the country predicts that by the end of this decade, there will be a significant shortage of workers in its respective sector. Indeed, The Conference Board of Canada most famously issued a report several years ago projecting that by the end of this decade, Canada would be facing a shortage of some one million workers in various fields.

What I find interesting is that we have a very well-educated population. As the OECD report demonstrates yet again today, Canada has the highest rate of enrolment in tertiary education. That is, essentially, to say university and post-secondary academic education. Therefore, about 52% of our youth are enrolled, participating in university level academic formation. That is a very good thing.

● (2245)

It means that effectively we have one of the best-educated populations in the world right now.

However, I must add parenthetically that there are at the same time some worrying signs on the dashboard. Last year the OECD issued a very disturbing report that demonstrated a slide, a decline, in basic numeracy and literacy for young Canadians vis-à-vis our international competitors. Asian countries, such as Korea, are skyrocketing ahead of Canada when it comes to results, particularly in the STEM disciplines of science, math, and the like.

Our primary and secondary education systems have to keep pace. It is not good enough to have a high rate of tertiary post-secondary enrolment.

However, one of the problems that vexes all of us is the continued stubbornly high level of youth unemployment. About 13% of Canadians between the ages of 15 and 25 who seek employment are unable to find it. This is clearly too high. Youth unemployment is about twice as high as general unemployment in our economy.

We see other cohorts in our population with similarly unacceptable high levels of unemployment. Recent immigrants, those who have been in Canada for less than five years, face an unemployment

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rate between 13% and 14%. There are some 800,000 Canadians with disabilities, according to the ministerial advisory Panel on Labour Market Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, who might be willing to or are interested in working but who do not have work, and we also have completely unacceptable levels of unemployment among our aboriginal people.

While our economy is generally prosperous and our labour market is doing significantly better than in most developed countries, these are areas that we all need to focus on. I invite creative ideas from all parties on how to address the challenge of youth unemployment, for example.

However, here is the paradox for me: we have very high levels of university enrolment, the highest in the developed world, yet very high youth unemployment as well. What is going on here?

Well, at the very same time, we see a boom in the commodities sector, the extractive industries in oil and gas, and in mines, in a huge swath of northern Canada from the offshore oil projects in Newfoundland and Labrador to Muskrat Falls hydroelectricity to iron ore developments and other mines in Labrador.

● (2250)

[*Translation*]

I am also thinking of all the mining projects in northern Quebec.

[*English*]

There is the Ring of Fire in northern Ontario, and projects all across the northern span of the Prairie west. My friends from Provencher and Brandon—Souris know very well the huge growth as a result of the Bakken reserve in southwest Manitoba that extends into Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan, of course, has huge uranium and potash developments, as well as oil and gas. There is bitumen in northern Alberta, which has the world's second-largest proven oil reserves.

There are energy infrastructure projects, such as Energy East and perhaps Keystone XL, with potential pipelines to our coasts. There are all of these huge projects.

There are also mines in British Columbia, a modest renaissance in the forestry industry, and huge mining potential and developments across the three northern territories.

[*Translation*]

In February, I had the opportunity to go to the Yukon, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut and see many of these projects at work; I wanted to find out how we can hire aboriginal workers to help train the workforce so that they can take part in these projects in northern British Columbia and in all these regions.

[*English*]

With all of those projects together, we have what some people are calling a new industrial revolution, and we ought not turn up our noses at it.

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There is in some perhaps elite policy circles a view that Canadians should be ashamed that much of our economic history has been characterized as “hewers of wood and drawers of water”. The truth is we are a highly advanced, extremely well-educated, diversified, and increasingly urbanized economy with value-added industries, with remarkable research development, science, technology, and high tech, with a very robust service industry. All of those are great things. We should never be ashamed.

I look at my friend from North Bay here, my friends from New Brunswick, my friends from all different corners of the country, whose livelihoods in those communities are dependent on forestry, mining, extractive industries, these things that have been the spine of the Canadian economy for 200 years. We have a new renaissance.

Here is the challenge. While increasingly technology drives those industries, we also need skilled tradespeople. We need the people who can actually build those mines, develop those energy projects, build the offshore platforms, build the hydroelectric dams, and so forth. We are talking here collectively about hundreds of thousands of future jobs in, not exclusively, but many of the skilled trades and related technical vocations.

Here is the big challenge I see. For the better part of 30 years our education system writ large has not been preparing young Canadians for those vocations, for the trades, for construction-related vocations, through apprenticeship programs. Instead, we as a society, all levels of government, the primary and secondary school systems, parents, the culture generally, have been sending all sorts of cues in creating multiple incentives for young people to go into tertiary academic university education. Typically the results of that kind of formation are very good. Typically the results are very strong. Typically incomes for young people with university degrees are significantly above the average.

But here is the truth. If we dig below the numbers, dig below the superficialities, we will see that there are many young people going to university, incurring debt, graduating with hope that they will be able to work in their field only to find that there is no employment, perhaps for people with degrees in international relations or communications or people who have graduated from our education faculties with teaching degrees. A growing number of those young Canadians find themselves either underemployed or worse, unemployed. Many of them find themselves frustratingly stuck, as they would see it, in the service industry at close to minimum wage. At the same time, here is the paradox. We have a growing demand for people in skilled trades and technical vocations. What is going on here?

There is another challenge. The public sector, federal and provincial governments, spend more collectively on skills development and job training than virtually any other developed economy in the world. The private sector companies in Canada spend less as a share of our GDP on skills development than virtually any developed economy. One way of looking at that is that employers have been getting a bit of a free ride on taxpayers' spending in skills development.

These are all reasons why I have said that I see the key part of my job as Minister of Employment in addressing the paradox of an

economy that has too many people without jobs and too many jobs without people.

Let us be clear. Again, we do not face general skills shortages. There are about 6.5 unemployed Canadians for every job that is being listed and unfilled. Clearly, there is a surplus of unemployed Canadians. That is what the aggregate labour market information tells us. This is why we do need substantially better, more granular labour market information. We need to know what is going on in particular regions and industries, which is why it was announced this week that our government will be launching two new robust labour market information surveys through Statistics Canada.

• (2255)

One is a quarterly survey on job vacancies that will get us very granular data by sector and region, and another is an annual survey on wage rates.

This will help us to much better inform policy and to communicate to young people where the best opportunities are. For example, later this year my ministry will be launching online, downloadable apps for smart phones, et cetera, that will help young people to establish what they are likely to make, in terms of salary, through different kinds of training.

They will, for example, be able to find out that someone with a political science bachelor of arts degree, on average, makes \$52,000 five years following graduation, but that someone who has completed a Red Seal certificate journeyman's program as an electrician, on average, is likely to be making \$63,000 five years following certification.

I am not sure high school counsellors are giving our young people the information that they can make more in the trades. In Britain—and this is remarkable—graduates of apprenticeship trade programs make, on average, the equivalent of a \$750,000 Canadian more over their lifetimes than university graduates do in the United Kingdom.

What I want to do is get similar comparative data in Canada that can help to inform the choices young people make. As a Conservative, I believe in maximizing human freedom. I do not think the government should tell young people what kind of formation to take, what kind of job they should be interested in, but what we must do is stop sending cues to young people that suggest they are not fulfilling their potential unless they go into an academic university program. That is wrong.

This is why in March I led a delegation that included many of Canada's major business and employer organizations, some of our largest unions, and five of our provincial governments to Germany and the United Kingdom to study European models of skills development and vocational education.

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I must say I was struck by how effective some of those systems are. In Germany, Switzerland, and Denmark, for example, the so-called Germanic model of vocational education training sees on average about two-thirds of their young people at age 16 go into paid trade apprenticeship programs. On average, these programs last for three years and result in their getting a certificate at age 19, a certificate that is considered by everyone in those societies as having the same social and economic value and merit as a university degree.

I know that to the Canadian ear, that might sound a bit disingenuous, but the truth is that everyone we met—government leaders, union leaders, business leaders, and academics—said that there is what they call “a parity of esteem” between skilled trades and professional occupations, between trade apprenticeship programs and university academic programs.

They do not, as we too often do, denigrate or diminish or devalue basic work, vocational training, trades, and apprenticeships. They regard those things as essential. They encourage them. They reward them. They invest in them. They value them. We must do the same here in Canada.

That is why one of the elements of the bill before us is the creation of what I think is the most exciting part of the budget, the Canada student apprenticeship loan. For the first time, we will now be providing interest-free loans of up to \$5,000 to an estimated 2,600 apprenticeship students during their block training so that they can help to finance that training.

Right now there is a big opportunity cost when they leave their paid apprenticeship to go into their unpaid block training. This loan would give them a little more financial flexibility. Just as importantly, we are sending a symbolic message that we value apprenticeship training and trades and vocational education just as much as we value university or college academic education.

• (2300)

That is a very important message we are sending in this budget, and I look forward to continued discussions on how we can continue to produce results.

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed parts of that speech, but I have a big problem with the minister's commitment to understanding a labour market. It results from looking at Treasury Board figures on how many people have been fired from Statistics Canada. Over the last three years, there have been over 2,000 employees fired from Statistics Canada. In the early 2000s, there were about 8,500 employees at Statistics Canada. Now there are about 4,500.

The Conservatives have been chopping and chopping away with their ideological attacks, getting rid of the long form census, and cutting out labour force surveys. Now they are saying they want to have a great handle on how the labour force works, and again, are relying on things like Kijiji to fill the holes.

These folks at Statistics Canada are some of the best trained statisticians in the world. I want to know when he will repopulate the labour force within Statistics Canada so we can understand what is going on with our labour force in Canada.

Hon. Jason Kenney: Mr. Speaker, in fact, Statistics Canada is one of the best resourced national statistics agencies in the world. It

is a professional organization that produces very high-quality data and that we support with investments. Its budget is certainly several hundred million dollars a year.

I know the following comment is kind of alien to our friends in the NDP, but we have to balance the budget. Unlike New Democrats, we want to balance the budget without raising taxes. That requires prudent spending management. The only sensible way—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I am having a hard time hearing the minister's response.

The Minister of Employment and Social Development has the floor.

Hon. Jason Kenney: Mr. Speaker, there is a lot of caterwauling about the notion of balancing budgets without raising taxes.

We could have balanced the budget without raising taxes, the Liberal approach, which would mean slashing transfers for health care. Instead we decided to compress spending in Ottawa's own administrative spending. That required small spending reductions in all agencies and departments.

Having said that, we want to get better results in labour market information, which is why I announced this week that we will be implementing immediately, through StatsCan, two major new labour market information studies at a cost of \$14 million: the quarterly vacancy survey and the annual wage rate survey.

• (2305)

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonaville—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the minister for his speech. I listened to it carefully. I must say, I enjoyed it. It was very thorough and he did it without notes. We have to give him credit for that.

From my own experience where I come from, one of the greatest exports we have, beyond the fish, beyond the wood, beyond the iron ore, and beyond the oil and gas is not so much the hewing of the wood and the drawing of the water; it is the hewers and the drawers. In other words, it is the people who own the skills. It is our talent. It is the people who have now become our greatest asset. They have gained an intellectual capacity such that they are becoming the greatest assets we have. They are building the economy through the revenues they earn, and they are making serious money. By doing this, they are creating our communities and the capacity for our communities to deliver services.

They do not go to the traditional workplace anymore. They leave Newfoundland and Labrador. They go to Russia. They go to North Africa and Norway. The pattern continues, and it is becoming incredible.

What I worry about, though, is the mix of certifications across the country. I find that there is a breakdown in communication between provinces about certification for these jobs and also some of the programs that are available to them, especially federally, and how they mix provincially.

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I do not have a lot of time. I wish I could get more into it. The nub of this is that I am worried that the government, instead of starting a conversation about this, is starting an argument, and that is not going to help us at all.

Hon. Jason Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the member raises excellent points. Of course, I do not agree that we are starting an argument. To the contrary, I co-convened the first meeting of the Forum of Labour Market Ministers in five years, which I think is ridiculous, last November in Toronto. We are having our next one in July. We want to have a regular, at least semi-annual, series of meetings to get collaboration between the federal and provincial governments.

The provincial ministers would tell the member that I worked very closely with the ministers and showed enormous flexibility so that they could sign up to the Canada job grant and the renewed labour market agreements, the Canada job fund, giving them the flexibility they need and getting our objective of greater employer investment in skills development. That would ensure that the training dollars actually go to creating real jobs and not to training for the sake of training.

If the hon. member talks to my provincial counterparts, he would find that I have really tried to be collaborative. We need to, albeit we are going in the same direction together, which is why I invited the provinces to study the European system with me. I totally agree with him that we need to do much better by knocking down the remaining provincial exceptions under chapter 7 of the Agreement on Internal Trade.

There is no reason why, in this federation of 13 jurisdictions, it should be more difficult for tradesmen or professionals to move from one jurisdiction to another than for someone to move within the 27 member states of the European Union. That is ridiculous. It should end. We need to eliminate those exemptions, and that is one of the reasons, by the way, we are practically supporting programs for the harmonization of apprenticeship systems to encourage mobility.

Mr. Mike Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the minister indicated in the budget, the apprentice loans piece of this is very important. Combined with the jobs grant, it puts some business money in the game with respect to employing these people.

When we were going through our youth employment study in the finance committee, one of the comments made by some of the post-secondary schools, especially the community colleges, was the need, as part of the transfer of their dollars, for reporting success metrics, which they were required to do.

I wonder if the minister would comment on maybe what some of those other jurisdictions are doing on that basis, because if we cannot measure it, we cannot manage it. I would like his comments on that.

Hon. Jason Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I want to commend the Province of British Columbia for actually taking the lead on this through what they call their initiative to, quote, “re-engineer” secondary and post-secondary education to do a radically better job of aligning those systems, in which billions of tax dollars are invested, with labour market outcomes. They are now saying basically to universities and colleges, “Show us. We are going to start surveying how many of your graduates in various programs end up getting employed in those disciplines or where they end up in the labour market.” They say that they are going to begin directing

subsidies to support those programs that are actually producing results and whose graduates are getting jobs for which they are trained. That is the kind of accountability we need in our education system.

I am encouraging the provinces to do that, and I am trying to work with them to upload information on labour market outcomes for post-secondary graduates to our labour market information system so that we can say that a psychology major has, for example, a 10% chance of working as a psychologist and what maybe their average income is.

We need that information. We need to give it to young people. Yes, young people should choose their future, but it should be an informed choice.

• (2310)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the hon. minister's speech ranged widely and interestingly over a number of topics, not necessary confined to the bill before us, but I want to pick up on one of the aspects of the presentation.

We talk a lot about pipelines as though they will inevitably create jobs for Canadians, but I remember spying, with some concern, a comment in *The Globe and Mail* that Enbridge was of course in partnership with PetroChina, and PetroChina would likely bid on any possible twinned pipeline between Kitimat and northern Alberta. *The Globe and Mail* business pages nodded sagely in the direction of the competitive advantage PetroChina would have in bringing its own workforce.

I wonder if the hon. minister has any thoughts about how Canada would deal with that sort of scenario, when so many Canadians want work.

Hon. Jason Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I have been absolutely clear in saying that the labour market model of certain foreign state-owned enterprises used around the world will not be replicated in Canada. Our rules will not permit, and we will not tolerate, airlifting entire labour camps of people into this country to work on projects like that, period.

I will be releasing a package of robust reforms to the temporary foreign worker program that will make it absolutely clear to those investors, to potential state-owned enterprises, to all Canadian employers, that the temporary foreign worker program must only and always be used as a last and limited resort. That will be absolutely clear. I share the member's concern. We will not tolerate what has happened in Africa and other countries with respect to the imported labour model of some of those state-owned enterprises.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup.

We are talking about Bill C-31, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on February 11, 2014 and other measures. We have heard a lot of talk by all members of the House today about Canada's economy and our fiscal performance over the years.

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It is appropriate to start my speech by going over some metrics, some actual numbers that tell Canadians what the performance of the government has been since Conservatives took office in 2006 until the end of 2013, which is where we have our most recent numbers.

The amount spent by the Conservative government on advertising since 2009, touting its economic action plans, is \$113 million. The national unemployment rate in Canada in 2006, just before the government took office, was 6.6%. Today it is 7.2%. The national unemployment rate of youth in 2006 at the time the Conservatives took office was 12.2%. Today it is over 14%.

Among 34 OECD nations in employment creation in the 2006-13 time period, Canada ranks 20th. The number of annual consecutive deficits filed by the government is six. The number of budget deficit targets hit by Conservative finance ministers since 2006 is zero.

The amount added to Canada's national federal debt since the Conservative government came to power in 2006 is \$123.5 billion. The portion of total federal debt that we have in Canada today, accumulated just since the government came to power in 2006, is one-fifth.

The per cent increase in the real average hourly wage of Canadians in 2006-13 is zero. The percentage drop in productivity, that is the GDP per employee in our country from 2006-13, is negative 1.9%.

In terms of trade, which is the area of my responsibility to watch and critique the government on, when the government came to power in 2006, Canada had a current account surplus of \$20.4 billion. That is the total of all goods, services and investments going in and out of the country. At the end of 2013, we had a deficit of \$60.4 billion. That is an \$80 billion swing to the negative in the last seven years, over \$10 billion of lost goods, services and investment in our country for each and every year that the government has been in power.

The merchandise trade deficit that exists in Canada today is a staggering \$110.4 billion. That means that we import \$110.4 billion more of manufactured items, the kind of items that characterize modern industrial economies, than we export. That is not surprising because under the current government, since 2006, the percentage of Canada's exports that are raw resources has gone up by 50%.

Quantitatively and qualitatively the trade performance of the government has been a disaster, no less a figure than former Bank of Canada governor Mark Carney said that the single biggest drag on the Canadian economy had been the government's underperformance in trade.

My hon. colleague from Skeena—Bulkley Valley, who is our finance critic now, talked about 2008 and what the real state of affairs was then. I happen to be fortunate enough to be sent here by the good people of Vancouver Kingsway at that time, so I was in the House in October 2008 as well, and I campaigned in that election.

I remember the Prime Minister, who was touted as an economist, during the campaign in September 2008 when asked if there was a recession coming, said that a recession was a "ridiculous hypothetical".

● (2315)

I was in the House with many other members in October 2008, when the finance minister tabled an economic update that projected a surplus for the next year and projected an austerity budget, only to be hit within a matter of weeks with the biggest recession to hit this country since the Great Depression. Neither the Prime Minister, through his economics training, nor the finance minister, with the full resources of the Department of Finance, with all of the tools at their disposal, could forecast that Canada was headed for a massive recession.

I want to talk about the deficit position of this country. When the Conservatives came to power in 2006, they inherited seven consecutive budget surpluses that averaged \$12 billion. From 2006 to 2008, the government cut the GST by two percentage points. With each percentage point cut, federal government revenue was reduced by \$6 billion. With that one move alone, the government had essentially eliminated the budgetary surplus, and it would have put Canada at balanced budget with just that one move.

However, the Conservatives did more. They made a policy decision to carry on with the Liberals' orgy of corporate tax cuts to go from 27% down to 21%. The Conservative government took corporate tax rates from 21% down to 15%—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Don Davies: Mr. Speaker, they may not be clapping when they hear the conclusion. It cost the federal government coffers an estimated further \$20 billion. What the Conservatives did was put Canada into a structural deficit. If there had been no recession whatsoever, with no requirement for special stimulus spending whatsoever, their poor policy-making and poor economic planning put the Canadian federal budget into structural deficit, which required what the government has done, which is slash services.

How has the government responded? What has it done? It has closed Coast Guard stations. It has closed Service Canada offices. It has closed veterans services and offices. It has sold foreign embassies and properties. It has slashed funding to the CBC. It has sold off Canada's coin collection. It has eliminated the small business job creation tax credit, the engine of Canada's economy that creates eight to nine out of every ten jobs in this country. It has eliminated support for small business in this country. It has obliterated environmental impact assessments. It has closed the Experimental Lakes program. It has cut scientists and public servants of all kinds. It has even allowed the sale of the theme song to *Hockey Night in Canada*.

That is what the government has done to make up for its poor economic planning and the fact that it cannot manage the federal budget and has put us in a structural deficit. What it has done is basically slash services to Canadians.

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What has the government done here? It has come back with another 360-page omnibus bill that has 500 clauses that would amend 60 acts, because it knows that if it put the discrete portions of this act before this House for scrutiny, Canadians would not tolerate many of the changes that exist in this bill. That is why the government does not have the courage to have each part of this act exposed to democratic scrutiny and the Canadian public. However, the Canadian public knows what is going on.

Do members know what? The biggest myth that is going around the House, and what always precedes the fall of a government, is the hubris with which they think everything is going well.

In Vancouver Kingsway, I can tell members that if we ask Canadians if they are better off today than they were in 2006, they would say no. If we talked to young people who are 22 or 24 years old and asked them if they are able to find the kind of job they dreamed of, start their career, and get a well-paid, family-sustaining job, they would say no. If we asked couples in their 30s in Vancouver and the Lower Mainland if they are able to buy a house, start their family, or find affordable housing, they would say no. If we asked single parents or retirees how comfortable they are, they would say that they are very worried. The Conservative government has increased the retirement age to receive old age security benefits from 65 to 67. It has made Canadians less secure.

In 2015, when we ask Canadians what their economic experience is under the Conservative government and whether these budgets have made their lives better, I do not think the Conservatives will be laughing then as loudly as they are tonight.

• (2320)

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I heard with interest the member's assertion that the government's reduction of corporate income tax rates resulted in a reduction of corporate income tax revenues. This demonstrates two things: one, that he is not familiar with the budget or the fiscal tables; and, two, that the New Democrats misunderstand the impact of tax rate cuts. I know I am not supposed to use props so I will not. I am looking at page 92, chart 3.23 in the budget document, which demonstrates that there is a direct correlation between the reduction in rates and an increase in corporate income tax revenues that went from \$30 billion in 2008 to about \$48 billion, projected to go to that in 2018 as the rates fell.

Revenues have grown as the rates fell. That is because we unleashed the creative capacity of the Canadian private sector. Will the member not at least admit that corporate income tax revenues have increased, allowing us to spend more on important social priorities?

The Deputy Speaker: I can advise the minister that the budget is not deemed a prop.

The hon. member for Vancouver Kingsway.

Mr. Don Davies: Mr. Speaker, cherry-picking figures has been a hallmark of the current government. I noticed that the minister picked corporate revenues from 2008, just when the recession was about to hit and compared them to projected numbers in 2018, as if that is a fair comparison.

The second point I would make is that the minister just admitted that he has slapped \$18 billion of extra income tax on corporations in this country, which seems to fly in the face of the Conservatives' claim that they have cut taxes for businesses.

Finally, what I would point out is that the Conservatives still believe in the discredited theories of Ronald Reagan and Milton Friedman, that the way to get more revenue is to cut taxes. Trickle-down economics does not work, cutting taxes does not work in terms of raising revenue. That is why the government is in trouble revenue-wise and has had to slash services to Canadians. Canadians are not buying it.

• (2325)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, there is a spirited exchange in the House tonight as we get near 11:30.

I am always reminded, when I hear about trickle-down economics, of John Kenneth Galbraith's great line that trickle-down economics is feeding the grain to the horse and then there might be something for the sparrows in the manure.

Is my hon. colleague concerned, as we see this omnibus budget bill through the House, that in the finance committee, dealing with multiple pieces of legislation, we did not actually ever get a single witness to speak to the portions of the bill that dealt with workplace hazardous chemicals? There was no testimony and no actual study of those portions of the bill. I attempted to amend some sections, but no one around the committee table knew anything about those sections because they never actually made it before the committee for having witnesses.

Mr. Don Davies: Mr. Speaker, that is absolutely true. One of the anti-democratic features of omnibus bills, which the current government has become addicted to, is that it means there are many provisions of a bill that are rammed through this House in committee that never are studied in any detail at all. Regardless of whether they are from the right, the left or the centre, it does not matter; that means poor governance.

It is the duty of representatives of this House. The Canadian public sent members of Parliament here as our primary duty to be a watchdog on government spending. That is the essential role of parliamentarians in this place. That means that we should be able to scrutinize and have time to look at and review every single proposal of the government. A government that is afraid of scrutiny, as is the current government, is a government that is afraid of the Canadian people.

I would point out one other thing. It is a fact in this country, and the Bank of Canada governors have pointed out, that there is some \$600 billion of corporate money sitting idly on the sidelines that is not being invested productively in our country, not being used for job creation. If it is true that cutting corporate taxes, as the Conservatives have said, would unleash the power of the corporate sector to stimulate the Canadian economy, they have some explaining to do as to why there is \$600 billion of idle capital on the side while there are more Canadians unemployed today than there were when the Conservatives came to office and household debt is at the highest level in Canadian history.

Government Orders

[Translation]

Mr. François Lapointe (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to acknowledge the work of my colleague from Vancouver Kingsway. It was very interesting watching him confront the current government with the very bad decisions it has made in recent years.

I am honoured to rise in the House to speak to Bill C-31, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on February 11, 2014 and other measures.

Canada has a poor record on key files. We accumulated a \$61-billion trade deficit in 2013. Canada has had a trade deficit in excess of \$45 billion for five years in a row. Canadians' debt reached record levels in 2013. People owe \$1.64 for every dollar of disposable income they earn in one year. We are facing some truly worrisome situations that must absolutely be addressed. However, we feel that what the current government calls an economic action plan does not tackle the major challenges that are going to catch up to us and hurt Canadians and the economy, if we do not do something about them immediately.

The NDP's position will be to oppose the bill at every stage because there is nothing in Bill C-31 that indicates that the Conservatives are actually addressing these real problems.

This bill has 360 pages and amends 60 laws. Once again, it is an omnibus bill. It brings back bad memories of Bill C-38 in 2012.

At the time, *Le Devoir* ran the following headline: "A mammoth bill to change the rules without debate—The 431-page bill amends more than 60 current laws". It seems that we are living in groundhog year. Everyone knows the movie *Groundhog Day*. Under the current government, we have been living groundhog day since 2011.

I would like to take a few minutes to explain the implications of an omnibus bill to the people at home. It reduces how much time the opposition parties, and the official opposition party in particular, have to analyze the issues. We do not have enough time to address the flaws in the bill. For example, this bill does not propose anything for SMEs. There is nothing solid, as far as we can tell. The bill eliminates the job creation tax credit for small businesses at a time when the unemployment rate might be up to 14% for people 25 and younger in a number of regions. It is absurd. How can the government attack a program that received support from all the regional chambers of commerce in the country? It is unbelievable and unacceptable.

We also do not have enough time with these omnibus bills to address any abuses that are hidden in these hundreds of pages. For example, this bill raises a lot of concerns over privacy protection with respect to the Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act. This is an American tax law on foreign accounts. The government is trying to deal with this in an omnibus budget bill.

However, the sharing of Canadians' information between financial institutions and the Internal Revenue Agency under this agreement, FATCA, would invade the privacy of roughly 1 million American citizens. This is hidden somewhere in the hundreds of pages of yet another omnibus bill.

That is not insignificant. There is another difficult aspect that the people at home need to understand. It is not their cup of tea to try to understand how this works in Parliament in Ottawa. The fact that the government stuffs everything in there makes it hard for the committees to do a decent job. There are decisions involving veterans and the environment hidden among these hundreds of pages.

These are important decisions that should have been and should be dealt with in separate bills that would allow the various all-party committees to invite all kinds of experts to examine the government's decisions. We could then find some better solutions, if it turns out that these are very bad decisions, as often happens. The decisions can sometimes be excellent if there is good co-operation.

We cannot do this kind of work when every single time this government tables a budget in this House, we have to deal with hundreds of pages and dozens of amendments to our laws.

● (2330)

One example that hits close to home for my constituents is rail safety, which once again is in a budget bill. This is a very important issue for my constituents. In the past 30 or 40 years, there have been three major train derailments in downtown Montmagny alone. These are recent events in Quebec, and dozens of people burned alive after trains carrying explosive products derailed. This is a priority for us.

Now, cabinet decisions about changing the security standards for the transportation of dangerous goods will be kept secret. Cabinet decisions on this issue will remain secret. With these changes, the public will not be informed when the Conservatives weaken safety measures, and experts will not be able to advise the minister before the changes are implemented. There are clauses in this bill to allow that.

Where were the Conservatives last summer when we witnessed the worst rail tragedy in our country's history? How can the government then hide a few lines in an omnibus bill saying that from now on, cabinet decisions on rail safety will not be transparent and public? How can the government do such a thing? It is clear that it does not have even the slightest interest in public safety.

Government Orders

Temporary foreign workers are a more recent problem. The bill gives the Minister of Employment and Social Development the power to impose fines on employers who break the rules of the temporary foreign worker program. This program has been in complete chaos for the past three months as a result of the government's serious mismanagement. Recently, in Rivière-du-Loup, we had a visit from the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Local television stations were there and recorded the whole thing. The minister promised that the moratorium would be lifted once the new procedures were put in place. The current moratorium is a cause of great concern for many small business owners who sometimes need to seek help from the temporary foreign worker program. As a result of the government's terrible mismanagement of this program, there is a moratorium in place. The abuses that led to this moratorium did not take place in Quebec City, Montmagny or Rivière-du-Loup, but elsewhere in the country.

It is now June 12. The minister obviously did not keep the formal commitment that he made in Rivière-du-Loup when he said that this problem would be resolved when the new procedures were implemented during the first week of June. The summer season, tourist season, is now upon us, and restaurants will have difficulty finding staff. They are wondering how they will find people to clean, wait tables and do dishes. We still have not received an answer.

It seems that the only solution the Conservatives are putting forward for the moment to improve the state of this program is a blacklist of employers who abuse the program. Believe it or not, there are only four companies on that list and they were all added since April 2014. They were added in a panic when the administrative nightmare began, as though the Conservatives were trying to save face at the last minute. It is unbelievable.

What intelligent and constructive measures could the Conservatives have included in this budget? They could have done away with the cuts to tax credits for credit union and labour-sponsored funds. These are extremely useful tools for the economic development of our regions. The Conservatives are attacking our regions with these cuts. They could have simplified the process whereby rural communities request and receive funding for infrastructure projects. Municipal officials have been waiting for nearly two years now to find out what the terms and conditions are for receiving funding under the new Building Canada fund. The government announced \$14 billion two years ago, but municipal officials still do not know what it takes to receive funding for their municipalities. They do not know anything about the documentation, the terms or the standards. It has been nearly two years. This is an absolute farce. These issues should have been resolved immediately after the budget was tabled. The list goes on and on.

• (2335)

The NDP will not support this budget because it does not address the real problems and it contains no real solutions.

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I take my hat off to the hon. member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup for having touched on so many different subjects in 10 minutes. That was quite a feat.

At the beginning of his speech, he echoed what our esteemed colleague from Vancouver Kingsway said about international trade

and the dramatic increase in our trade deficit. I know that there are a number of businesses in my colleague's riding that export to the United States and elsewhere. They are suffering because of this situation.

In a speech last October, the former senior deputy governor of the Bank of Canada talked about one aspect of the issue:

If Canada's exports had grown in tandem with those of the U.S. and global economies...[Canada's] goods exports would have been \$71 billion higher [than they were in 2002].

Could my colleague talk about this disaster, for which the Conservative government is largely responsible?

• (2340)

Mr. François Lapointe: Mr. Speaker, a number of innovative medium-sized businesses in my riding have patents and are exporters.

They have told me about the problems they are having with exporting, problems that are partly related to the sluggish American market. However, some of the decisions made here have made it difficult to maintain exports. Nearly all of them have told me that, in the past four years, we have fallen way behind in research and development. All of these elements are related.

We cannot think of our country as strong and maintain our export levels if we are not among the most innovative countries. If we make the same watch as a Chinese or Japanese company, that is not very appealing to Germans. We have to create different things.

All of these bad decisions have been made over the past seven years. The fact that the deficit has been over \$45 billion per year is no accident, nor is our poor trade performance over the past five years.

How can the members on the other side of the House stand up and brag about what amazing economists they are in light of these failures?

Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP): Mr. Speaker, earlier, the minister talked about paradoxes. We might talk about the paradox of a government that is more interested in image than the economy.

It runs ads on a job creation and job training program, when that program never existed. It is the same problem with immigrant workers. The government says it will monitor the situation and create a blacklist, but there are only four names on the list and none of these companies have been penalized. It takes some nerve. Then this government claims it wants to get things done.

Could my colleague say a few words about this government that never lives up to its promises?

Mr. François Lapointe: Mr. Speaker, there are also some clauses in the budget implementation bill on veterans.

Along the same lines as what my colleague said, \$4 million was recently spent on advertising to remind Canadians about how important veterans are. I saw that ad three times. The best way to show Canadians how important veterans are would have been to spend \$4 million on services for veterans, not advertising.

Government Orders

This is a perfect example of what my colleague was talking about, and unfortunately these examples are piling up. The government is putting its image ahead of good results.

* * *

[English]

PROTECTION OF COMMUNITIES AND EXPLOITED PERSONS ACT

BILL C-36—NOTICE OF TIME ALLOCATION

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do regret to advise that an agreement could not be reached under the provisions of Standing Order 78(1) or 78(2) with respect to the second reading stage of Bill C-36, An Act to amend the Criminal Code in response to the Supreme Court of Canada decision in Attorney General of Canada v. Bedford and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

Under the provisions of Standing Order 78(3), I give notice that a minister of the crown will propose at the next sitting a motion to allot a specific number of days or hours for the consideration and disposal of proceedings at the said stage.

* * *

ECONOMIC ACTION PLAN 2014 ACT, NO. 1

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-31, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on February 11, 2014 and other measures, be read the third time and passed, and of the amendment.

Mr. Jay Aspin (Nipissing—Timiskaming, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to speak this evening to Bill C-31, the economic action plan 2014 act. However, before I do, I would like to contextualize this legislation.

During the global recession, our government made the difficult but necessary decision to engage in deficit spending, making record investments from coast to coast to coast in infrastructure projects supporting jobs and putting Canadians to work.

Our investments worked. While the global recession was difficult for many Canadian families, the effects never reached the severity experienced abroad, such as in the United States and Europe.

More important, our investments helped the domestic economy keep moving so that when the recovery began, Canada was much better positioned to rebound, and recover Canada did, the best recovery in the G7. We have led in job creation with over one million net new jobs. We have led in growth of disposal income. We have led the world in debt-to-GDP ratio.

However, this success does not change the fact that we created a deficit. Our government understands very well that long-term deficits, which increase the debt-to-GDP ratio, are toxic for the economy. The more debt a country takes on, the more hesitant businesses become to invest and create jobs. This is because uncertainty is created in the economy and everyone, especially businesses, knows that at some point the debt will have to be paid, and it often takes the form of spending cuts and/or increased taxes.

These cuts and taxes become more severe the larger the debt gets and the longer governments delay to make the necessary decisions. Therefore, once the recovery began, instead of irresponsibly spending money we did not have, our government immediately began passing budget after budget to completely eliminate our deficit, make government lean, spend strategically and responsibly, and create an environment conducive to investment and economic growth.

We have been successful, but members do not need to take my word for it. Canada's number one record in the G7, rock-solid credit rating and international leadership in fiscal responsibility speaks for itself.

On February 11, our dear friend and colleague, one of Canada's longest serving finance ministers, the late Hon. Jim Flaherty, introduced economic action plan 2014. This budget is very important. Since its introduction, I am very pleased to say that our budget is indeed balanced.

However, a balanced budget does not mean that we start spending every extra penny on shiny baubles, which is the strength of economic action plan 2014. It continues to reduce government spending where possible, decreasing the cost to taxpayers without reducing transfers to the provinces or health care transfers.

I want to stress that we balanced the budget without drastic or draconian cuts to important services and funds on which the provinces and Canadians rely on. We instead reduced the size of government and reined in unnecessary spending.

Moreover, the economic action plan continues to focus on this government's number one priority: jobs and the economy. There are still many Canadians looking for work and trying their best to support their families. They are relying on our government to continue creating the right conditions for business to invest and create jobs.

This implementation act, the first economic action plan act, focuses on reducing barriers to employment in both the demand and supply side. Hiring Canadians should not be an administrative burden for businesses. We are reducing unnecessary regulations on job creators and incentivizing them to grow and hire.

Just the same, a lack of education or training should not be a barrier to employment, and that is why we are helping Canadians access trade skills training.

I would like to use my remaining time to highlight a few particular measures in the first economic action plan act that will help further grow our economy, create jobs and improve Canada's prosperity and standard of living.

Government Orders

• (2345)

First, as part of our government's ongoing efforts to refine the immigration system to make sure it works in Canada's best interests, \$11 million will be spent over the next two years, and \$3.5 million every year afterwards will be invested to provide a more robust labour market option process. This will further help government ensure that Canadians are given the first chance at jobs.

Bill C-31 would help facilitate this by eliminating a backlog of immigrant investor program and entrepreneur program applicants. The elimination of this backlog would help businesses quickly adapt to changing labour markets in Canada by having more efficient access to the most qualified candidates, and enable them to remain productive and profitable and generate jobs and revenue for the Canadian economy.

Second, our government would continue to remove unnecessary regulations on businesses in order to foster an environment more conducive to investment and economic growth. Regulations on businesses are necessary to ensure that they play by the rules, treat their employees well, follow industry standards, and pay their share of taxes.

However, overregulation suffocates businesses as more and more resources are diverted to deal with unnecessary or inefficient administrative obligations. Ultimately, businesses waste money on administration that could have been invested in growing their business and subsequently hiring more Canadians.

Bill C-31 would reduce red tape on more than 50,000 employers. Specifically, the threshold at which small and medium-sized businesses would have to provide remittances for source deductions would be increased. This would further decrease the tax compliance burden on SMEs.

Third, with the resurgence of trade skills, our government would reduce the barrier to employment in well-paying industries by making training more affordable to Canadians. Apprentices registered in the Red Seal trades would be provided with access to interest-free loans of up to \$4,000 per period of technical training.

This measure, like the Canada jobs grant incentive, is part of our government's strategy to connect Canadians with jobs and increase incentives to additional education or training. A more educated and skilled work force would improve the productivity of our economy, make us more competitive, make Canadian goods wanted around the world, and grow economic well-being at home.

Our government will continue investing in the development of our natural resources, particularly in the mining sector. Countries around the world are making the transition to advanced economies, and they are investing in infrastructure and are hungry for energy and raw materials, all of which we Canadians have in abundance.

Bill C-31 would extend the mineral exploration tax credit of 15% for another full year. This tax credit is relied upon by junior mining companies, exploration companies that are making key discoveries and appraisals of new and existing deposits. This is a very important measure to mining firms in my riding of Nipissing—Timiskaming in northern Ontario, close to the Ring of Fire, one of the world's largest mineral reserves.

Having a strong appreciation for the volume and location of deposits in the Ring of Fire will play a key role when we begin developing the resources; excavation will be more efficient, and we will be able to generate more goods for export.

Northern Ontario and Canada will greatly benefit from the development of the Ring of Fire. I am pleased with this measure.

Bill C-31 would continue to build on our government's success of balancing the budget, making responsible and strategic investments to keep the economy on track, cultivating an environment conducive to job creation, and focusing on connecting Canadians with the skills and training they need to participate in the market.

I encourage the members opposite to support these important measures and help empower Canadian businesses and workers.

• (2350)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, according to the announcement about the new Building Canada fund, there was \$6 billion left over from the 2007 plan even though Canada has a major infrastructure deficit.

How is it possible that \$6 billion was left over from the 2007 budget?

[*English*]

Mr. Jay Aspin: Mr. Speaker, there the New Democrats go again, picking apart situations piecemeal.

As I have said, this budget, with the measures that I have talked about—refining the immigration system, red tape reduction, training incentives, the Red Seal program, creating incentives for mineral exploration—are all positive measures that will grow our economy.

The member for Vancouver Kingsway listed a lot of metrics. How about these metrics? Over one million net new jobs have been created in Canada; for the sixth year, the World Economic Forum has ranked Canada's banking system as the soundest in the world; Canada has leapt from sixth to second place in Bloomberg's ranking of the most attractive countries for business to grow; Canada has the lowest overall tax rate on new business investment in the G7; Canada is the only country in the G7 to have a rock-solid AAA rating; and Canada's net debt-to-GDP ratio remains the lowest in the G7 by far.

These are overall macro measures that show we are among the best in the world in terms of economic recovery.

Adjournment Proceedings

● (2355)

Mr. Gerald Keddy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue and for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after listening to opposition members speak on the budget tonight, I am sure the hon. member would agree that they left out a lot of information, and he just had an opportunity to list some of those items. They talk about our trade deficit, but they forget to talk about the fact that they have never supported expanding trade anywhere around the world. Of the 38 countries we have signed trade agreements with, they have not supported one single agreement, not ever.

The hon. member mentioned that he is from an area that is very dependent upon resource exploitation, and on mining in particular. My question to him is quite simple. There is a lot of noise coming from across the way, but it is a basic question. How can Canadians expect to sell those resources to develop our economy if we do not have trade agreements in place with countries around the world so that we can trade with those countries on fair terms?

Mr. Jay Aspin: Mr. Speaker, my riding is in a mining region in northern Ontario, and the businesses in my area rely on trade throughout the world. They participate in mining activity in South America, the Philippines, and Africa. Without that, my particular area would not grow, and Canada would not have grown into the prosperous nation it is today.

We are expanding that trade by signing trade agreements with the European Union, Korea, and Honduras. These agreements are all very positive for the prosperity of Canadians, unlike the party opposite, the no-trade party.

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate. The hon. member for York Centre will have about two minutes before time expires.

Mr. Mark Adler (York Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I always welcome an opportunity to talk about our economy and the great success we have achieved, notwithstanding going through the worst recession since the Great Depression in 2008-09.

Canadians are not known for their bragging or beating of their chests, but if we listen to the opposition we would get the impression that our economy is the video recorder version of the Betamax. The opposition would say that Ted Williams was an awful baseball player because he missed the ball 66% of the time that he was at bat. Those members would also say that Wayne Gretzky, who did not score a goal 85% of the time that he shot the puck, was a horrible hockey player because the guy only scored 15% of the time. They would ask what all the hype was about.

Canada is the envy of the world.

It is my pleasure to rise in the House this evening and speak to Bill C-31.

Our government's fiscal management speaks for itself. We have identified the issues that matter most to Canadians. We have once again addressed these issues in a focused and surgically precise budget. This budget will keep our government on track to balance in 2015 as promised to the Canadian people. Our government keeps our promises.

● (2400)

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The time for debate on this legislation has expired. The member for York Centre will have eight minutes when we resume debate.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*English*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening in adjournment proceedings to pursue a question I put to the Minister of the Environment on May 12. The question was one of many I have put to the minister and the Prime Minister in an attempt to get a clear answer as to whether this Conservative administration remains committed to the Copenhagen target, which the Prime Minister personally adopted when he participated in the United Nations conference in 2009. He attended briefly toward the end of the meeting, and there was, as close observers of the climate debate will know, a non-UN process that took place in a back room among a number of the world leaders, including Barack Obama, the President of the United States, and the Chinese government. Canada was not in that room, but when those leaders emerged with something called a non-binding political agreement, Canada signed onto that. In doing so, the Prime Minister adopted the same target that President Obama had announced. All countries within this politically binding agreement, in other words, not binding at all, agreed to take on different targets. Canada decided to take the U.S. target, which was 17% below 2005 levels by 2020.

This amounted to the second reduction in targets from the time the current Prime Minister assumed that position back in 2006. The first step was his announcement that Canada did not consider itself obligated to meet what was then a legally binding target under the Kyoto protocol. He chose a weaker target of 20% below 2006 levels by 2020, and changed it in 2009 to a weaker target, because ironically, the year 2005 had higher emissions than the year 2006, so it became convenient to adopt the U.S. target. It actually weakened our targets once again.

The reason I keep trying to find out if we are even committed to this weak target is that according to Environment Canada, based on all current steps that have been taken within Canada, federally and provincially, all targets combined amount to a three megatonne reduction below 2005 levels, when a 130-megatonne reduction below 2005 levels was promised.

Adjournment Proceedings

It seems to be a matter of some substance and importance to know if the current administration is committed to the target it chose. I think we could still get there. We could still do it, but it would require a plan. It would require an economy-wide plan. It would require some form of carbon pricing. It would require the elimination of subsidies to fossil fuels. In other words, it would have to be a serious effort to meet a weak target, because as things stand right now, 2005 levels were 737 megatonnes, and we are projecting for 2020 734 megatonnes, a three megatonne drop. The target is 613 megatonnes. These numbers come from Environment Canada. There is no dispute about them. The only question is, where is the plan?

Is the government still committed to the target that the Prime Minister adopted personally? It was not through his environment minister, not from the previous prime minister, not from the Liberals, not from Jean Chrétien, and not from Paul Martin. The current Prime Minister adopted this target in a world forum and continues to act as though we have made some progress, when in fact we are standing still. I hope for a better answer this evening.

● (2405)

Ms. Lois Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, here we are, Wednesday night, after midnight. It is déjà vu all over again.

Our government is committed to achieving Canada's targets and our record speaks for itself. We will continue to take action with our sector-by-sector approach, which has been achieving real results while fostering economic growth. So far, our government has contributed to reducing Canada's emissions through stringent regulations for the transportation and electricity sectors, two of the largest sources of emissions in Canada.

I would now like to take a moment to highlight some of the great achievements we have made so far. First, Canada has strengthened its position as a world leader in clean energy production by becoming the first major coal user to ban future construction of traditional coal-fired electricity generation units. Second, 2025 passenger vehicles and light trucks will emit about half as many greenhouse gases as 2008 models. Third, greenhouse gas emissions from 2018 model year heavy-duty vehicles will be reduced by up to 23%.

Let me reiterate. Our government's collective actions are achieving real results. Thanks to our actions, carbon emissions will go down close to 130 megatonnes from what they would have been under the Liberals. This is a reduction equivalent to the elimination of 37 coal-fired electricity plants. We are accomplishing this without the NDP's carbon tax, which would raise the price of everything.

Between 2005 and 2011, greenhouse gas emissions have decreased by 4.8%, while the economy has grown by 8.4%. Per capita emissions are at an historic low. In addition to doing our part through the United Nations, we are also actively involved in fora such as the Arctic Council, the Montreal protocol, and the climate and clean air coalition, to develop practical and collaborative initiatives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and short-lived climate pollutants.

Canada has strong international commitments to support developing country mitigation and adaptation efforts. Our Conservative government, in partnership with other developed countries, has fully

delivered on the fast start financing commitment, which provided \$30 billion over the three-year period of 2010 to 2012. In fact, we exceeded the commitment by providing \$33 billion. As can clearly be seen, the figures speak for themselves. Our government has committed the largest ever contribution to support international efforts to address climate change, a contribution that has supported mitigation and adaptation efforts in over 60 developing countries.

We remain committed to working with other countries to address climate change.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I am so sorry that my dear friend the parliamentary secretary has to debate this after midnight when we started the day together at 7 a.m.

However, the reality is that although everything she said is true, none of it adds up to a plan to meet the Copenhagen target. The coal regs do not take effect until 2015 and are fully considered when Environment Canada projects that by 2020 we will have reduced by 3 megatonnes.

The statistic she just gave us of what the emissions were between 2005 and 2011 is also accurate. However, between 2011 and 2020, what she did not add is that Environment Canada projects that emissions will keep rising. They are rising to reach 734 megatonnes by 2020, not dropping.

It is not her fault, because it is repeated ad nauseam. The nonsense that this is 130 megatonnes less than what would have happened under the Liberals is their spin around a concept called business as usual, which is a hypothetical imagining of what would happen in some future if nothing happened anywhere, not counting Ontario's or B.C.'s reductions. In other words, business as usual as a figure is irrelevant to the Copenhagen target, which required absolute reductions by 17%. We need a plan.

● (2410)

Ms. Lois Brown: Mr. Speaker, our government recognizes that climate change is a shared challenge that requires action by provinces and territories, businesses, and all Canadians. Provincial and territorial governments and others are taking action on climate change, according to their own circumstances. The federal government supports the efforts of provinces and territories, businesses, and consumers to lower their emissions and these measures will also contribute toward Canada's climate change objectives.

If I may just say, I believe it is incumbent on each one of us as consumers to start making different choices. That is what is going to lower emissions in the long run: when we each take responsibility for the things that we use, the things that we purchase, and the things that we consume. It is up to us.

Adjournment Proceedings

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to an order made on Tuesday, May 27, 2014, the motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted.

Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until later this day at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 12:11 a.m.)

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