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(HANSARD)

Wednesday, April 22, 2015

—

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, April 22, 2015

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]

SENIORS

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon (Mississauga East—Cooksville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Saturday, April 18, was a very exciting day in Mississauga East—Cooksville. I was pleased to host a 50+ Expo, which welcomed hundreds of constituents who took time to visit the many vendors on a variety of topics concerning people 50 years of age and over in our community.

I want to thank the vendors who took time to share with our guests on topics such as safety, financial management, travel, recreation, and more. Service Canada gave presentations on CPP, OAS, and caring for aging family members.

I am happy to say that economic action plan 2015 will support seniors by introducing changes to the registered retirement income fund and by introducing the home accessibility tax credit, which will help with home improvement costs so that seniors can live independently in their homes.

Finally, the 50+ Expo provided an opportunity to meet with constituents and hear their feedback and encouragement. Indeed, it was a wonderful spring day in Mississauga East—Cooksville.

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BATTLE OF YPRES

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, 100 years ago this month, Canadian soldiers bravely fought in the second battle of Ypres. They distinguished themselves by their courage and tenacity in the face of unspeakable horrors, including the world's first poison gas attack. While other forces bled and fled,

the Canadians held the line against all odds. It proved to be the beginning of their ascent into their recognized status as the pre-eminent fighting force in Flanders. More than 6,500 Canadians were killed, wounded, or captured during the two battles, including many brave men from the Essex Scottish Regiment.

The sacrifices of our veterans did not end in the trenches of France. Many came back to their homes debilitated, wounded in mind and spirit, yet in spite of their limitations, they still contributed to building our great country. They overcame the odds against them to become valued members of society.

The guns have long been silent since they won the war. We know all the heroes are gone now, but we still recognize them as our greatest generation. Even 100 years later, honours still come their way, including most recently from Queen Elizabeth II, at Canada House in London.

We will remember them.

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LEGION OF HONOUR

Mr. Scott Armstrong (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I stand in my place today to recognize a great veteran in my riding: Sir Sylvester Bus McCallum. For his contributions to the allied war effort in World War II, Sir Bus was recently granted a knighthood in the French Legion of Honour. This is the highest honour the French government bestows upon international residents.

In 1944, at just 17 years of age, Sir Bus sailed to Europe and was soon one of the first Canadian soldiers to storm the beaches of Normandy on D-Day. Later on, in Belgium, he was wounded by a piece of shrapnel while trying to rescue one of his fellow Canadian soldiers from harm's way.

It is thanks to the heroic efforts of men like Sylvester Bus McCallum that in Canada today we enjoy the freedom and democracy we do. I would like to offer my heartfelt congratulations to Sir Bus, his wife Doris, and the entire McCallum family. I thank him for service, his bravery, and his dedication to this great nation.

*Statements by Members***GOVERNOR GENERAL'S CARING CANADIAN AWARD**

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate Patricia Lafford for having received the Governor General's Caring Canadian Award last week.

Patsy has long been an important part of the Sackville and Tantramar, New Brunswick communities. She has given her time to help those around her who are in need. She helped found, for example, the Sackville Food Bank in 1988 and was a very active member of the Catholic Women's League. She even brings communion to residents of a local nursing home who are unable to travel to regular church services, all the while finding time to care for her 10 beloved grandchildren.

I have known Patsy for many years and have constantly been impressed by her love of community. Patricia Lafford is exactly the kind of person this award was created to recognize.

Once again, my sincere congratulations to Patricia Lafford and her family and to Sackville and Tantramar for being home to such a terrific woman.

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ONTARIO THEATRE FESTIVALS

Mr. Gary Schellenberger (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to congratulate the Stratford Festival on its 2015 season, opening later this spring.

For over 60 years, people from around the world have come to Stratford for unparalleled performances from North America's leading theatre company. This year's performances include *The Sound of Music*, *Hamlet*, *The Diary of Anne Frank*, and many more.

In addition to the Stratford Festival, I would also like to recognize other theatre groups in southwestern Ontario that greatly contribute to the arts and culture of this nation. Drayton Entertainment, the Shaw Festival, the Grand Theatre in London, the Blyth Festival, and many other companies, are examples of these great assets in Canada.

I congratulate all of these theatre groups for their continued success and thank them for their enormous contribution to the arts in Canada.

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[*Translation*]**EARTH DAY**

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today is a very special day because we are celebrating something unique and irreplaceable, something that we all share no matter where we live or who we are. Today is Earth Day.

Since the environmental movement took root in the 1970s, there has been growing awareness worldwide that we must protect our planet to ensure a viable future for all. Many in Laurier—Sainte-Marie have taken up the challenge, including Amis du courant Sainte-Marie, Les Valoristes, Les Amis du Champ des possibles, the Carrefour alimentaire Centre-Sud, Sentier Urbain, Cultivons le Plateau and the Éco-quartier program. Many individuals are working to green their alleyways and taking the time every day to think about how their actions affect our environment and have an impact on the

whole world, as well as about the future that we are creating for the coming generations.

Let us join them. Happy Earth Day.

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● (1410)

[*English*]**WORLD WAR II VETERANS**

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this past week, I took an amazing trip back in time while visiting with five of our World War II veterans. It was truly one of the highlights of my time as a member of Parliament.

The purpose of my visit was to thank these extraordinary men for their service and the sacrifice that they made during World War II: Edward Titchner, Francis Newland, Donald Monteith, Bernard Stankevich, and Gerald Russell. All were very young men when they left their homes during World War II, setting out with purpose in their heart to do what Canadians do when called upon: fight for what is right.

Talking with these gentlemen reaffirmed my belief that the greatness of our country is the character of its citizens. These men, so very humble about their contributions during the war, are proud of their community, proud of their sons and daughters, and proud of the country they helped build, Canada.

Edward, Francis, Donald, Bernard, and Gerald, I am proud to be their member of Parliament and again, on behalf of everyone in this place, I thank them.

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THE BUDGET

Hon. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday was the 18th time I sat in this chamber and listened to a budget being presented in this House of Commons. Eleven of them have been Conservative budgets. This was only possible because of the constituents of Calgary East. This morning, Canadians of all ages and from all walks of life are pleased that we have kept our promise to them by balancing the budget in 2015, the first balanced budget since the great recession.

This budget reaches out to all Canadians, from the hard-working constituents of Calgary East to everyone else across this great country. This budget supports jobs and growth. It helps our families and our communities prosper. It ensures the security of Canadians. It lowers taxes and provides benefits directly to families, assist small businesses and support seniors.

Our government will continue to manage Canada's economy well, focus on job creation and keep Canada safe.

* * *

[*Translation*]**EARTH DAY**

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, each of us has the power to make changes that can have a significant impact on the environment, especially if we work together.

Statements by Members

Earth Day is an ideal opportunity for Canadians to join together to preserve our planet.

New Democrats want to leave future generations a cleaner, healthier planet. The Conservatives, however, have failed Canadians when it comes to climate change.

[English]

After systematically dismantling Canada's environmental protection laws, we were handed a Conservative budget that does not even mention the words "climate change." Canadians deserve better.

The NDP is the only party with a credible plan to protect the environment and grow the economy, including with the climate change accountability act, which is strong, effective legislation that would be our offer to the global community to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The greatest legacy we can offer future generations is a clean and healthy planet. Let us work together to make that happen.

* * *

THE BUDGET

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon (Miramichi, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since 2006, our Conservative government has delivered for seniors with income splitting for pensioners and the largest top-up to the guaranteed income supplement in a quarter decade.

Unlike last month's Liberal budget in the province of New Brunswick, which attacked seniors and increased the cost of nursing home care and prescription drugs, economic action plan 2015 would build on our support for seniors by increasing the tax-free savings account annual contribution limit, introducing a new home accessibility tax credit, establishing a Canadian centre for aging and brain health innovation, and extending employment insurance compassionate care benefits from six weeks to over six months.

In addition, the Mayor of Fredericton said, "Well, we're very pleased. That's exactly what we asked for".

Unfortunately, the leader of the Liberal Party has already said that he would cancel our expansion of the tax-free savings account and increase taxes on middle-class seniors.

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[Translation]

THE BUDGET

Ms. Mylène Freeman (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government balanced the budget yesterday at the expense of Canadian women. The Conservatives' tax policy is a total failure for gender equality.

Budget day also happened to be Equal Pay Day. Yes, it was also a day to remind everyone that a woman must work until April of the next year to earn the same amount made by a man the previous year. That is a 30% gap. Yesterday's Conservative budget provides nothing to reduce the gender gap. In fact, it is more like the same old same old, creating even more obstacles for women, with measures that are good for only a small group of Canadians.

Instead of providing affordable and accessible child care for all families, the Conservatives chose to spend billions of dollars on income splitting for the wealthy, a measure that will decrease women's participation in the workforce.

Canadians deserve better. We deserve a budget that takes into account the burden of unpaid work, the wage gap and the high rates of violence against women. We deserve an NDP government.

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● (1415)

[English]

TAXATION

Mr. Parm Gill (Brampton—Springdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Finance tabled our plan for jobs and growth. This is a great budget for middle-class Canadians. For example, the new family tax cut and enhanced universal child care benefit will benefit 100% of families with kids, the vast majority of benefits going to low- and middle-income families.

The Liberals and the NDP will take all of these away. They want high taxes on middle-class families, high taxes on middle-class seniors and high taxes on middle-class consumers. That is their plan for the middle class. Our government's plan is reducing taxes on middle-class families.

Constituents in my riding of Brampton—Springdale are looking forward to the implementation of all of these benefits and support programs that are offered in this budget.

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BATTLE OF YPRES

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, "In Flanders fields the poppies blow, Between the crosses, row on row". It was in the terrible shadow of those graves and the nearly 6,000 Canadian casualties of the Second Battle of Ypres that Guelph native, Colonel John McCrae, composed *In Flanders Fields*. We commemorate the anniversary of that battle, which began 100 years ago today.

Over the next two days, Canadian and other allied troops would face the first real deployment of chemical weapons as they fought through chlorine gas. Despite the heavy losses, nearly one in three, Canadians established themselves as a military force to be reckoned with.

I was so fortunate to visit Ypres last year and was astonished to think that so many young Canadians could have fought and died somewhere so serene. I felt I finally understood the full weight of our sacred obligation to Canadian veterans as the silence was broken by young Canadian students reading solemnly in turn, "If ye break faith with us who die, We shall not sleep, though poppies grow In Flanders fields".

Lest we forget.

*Oral Questions***TAXATION**

Mr. Rob Clarke (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our low-tax plan for families is working. Under our Conservative government, the tax burden on Canadians is at the lowest level in more than 50 years.

As part of that, every family with children will benefit from our new family tax cut and enhanced universal child care benefit. The family tax cut and enhanced universal child care benefit will leave 100% of families with kids with more money in their pockets.

The Liberals and the NDP will take this away. They want higher taxes on middle-class families, high taxes on middle-class seniors and high taxes on middle-class consumers. That is their plan for the middle class. Our government's plan is reducing taxes on the middle class.

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[Translation]

THE BUDGET

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance is like David Copperfield. He made a surplus appear. Analysts are calling this creative accounting, a smokescreen, really.

Canadians are not fools. They know that the Conservatives have mismanaged our economy and that we have lost 400,000 well-paying jobs since the Conservatives came to power. Canadians know that this government put all its eggs in one barrel of oil.

Instead of proposing measures to help middle-class families, who are finding it more and more difficult to make ends meet, the Conservatives insist on helping their friends, the well-off and the CEOs, those who do not need help.

Canadians deserve better. In October, they can choose the only party that fights for them in good times and in bad: the NDP.

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[English]

TAXATION

Ms. Joyce Bateman (Winnipeg South Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our budget honours this government's commitment to increase the annual tax-free savings account contribution to \$10,000. This initiative significantly benefits seniors. In fact, 70% of those who maximize their accounts are seniors.

Economic action plan 2015 also allows more choice and flexibility for seniors' retirement by relaxing the rules around withdrawals from registered retirement income funds, something the Canadian Association of Retired Persons strongly supports.

Our Conservative government will continue to stand up for seniors and middle-class families by putting more money in their pockets, but the Liberals would take this money away. They would raise taxes on middle-class families and middle-class seniors.

Our government will continue to support a low-tax plan for jobs, growth and long-term prosperity.

ORAL QUESTIONS

● (1420)

[English]

THE BUDGET

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last night, when talking about how to pay for the massive multi-year costs of the Prime Minister's tax giveaways to the wealthiest few, the finance minister had this to say:

...why don't we leave that to [the Prime Minister's] granddaughter to solve that problem.

Leave it to our grandchildren. Really? I have grandchildren and like so many grandparents I do not want to leave the responsibility for cleaning up the Prime Minister's mess to my grandchildren.

Will the Prime Minister stand in his place and reject those unacceptable statements by his finance minister?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance was dismissing a clearly preposterous argument.

The tax-free savings accounts have been great things for Canadians, for the Canadian middle class and for the Canadian economy. As I said when we created that program several years ago, those billions of dollars that middle-class people are putting away will create tens of billions of dollars of long-term savings in our economy, which will drive jobs and growth. These are a good thing.

I know the NDP wants to raise taxes on middle-class families. It does not want to see middle-class families be able to do those savings. We are proud to be able to deliver for them.

[Translation]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that is appalling. His government is going to leave the largest economic, social and environmental debt ever to future generations, and the Prime Minister just said that he agrees with his Minister of Finance. Shame on him.

Today is Earth Day. The budget makes no mention of climate change, which is a real threat with catastrophic consequences. Is the Prime Minister really going to pass this burden on to our grandchildren? It may already be too late.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative Party is the only party to have ever reduced greenhouse gas emissions. There are still many programs in the budget to support research that will lead to reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. Once again, the budget rejects the carbon taxes and consumption taxes proposed by the NDP. That is not a good policy for the middle class. We support what matters to the middle class.

*Oral Questions***ETHICS**

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in Canada, a senator must be a resident of the province for which he is appointed. That is a basic requirement. The Prime Minister should not have any difficulty answering this question, because it is really very simple. When he appointed Mike Duffy to the Senate, did the Prime Minister believe that Mike Duffy was a resident of Prince Edward Island, yes or no?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, the government followed practices established almost 150 years ago by Canada's Constitution. This is about the actions and statements of Mr. Duffy, whose case is before the courts. Obviously, I do not intend to comment on the testimony in this case.

[English]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister refers to a 150-year parliamentary practice emanating from the Constitution, so why do we not look at what the Constitution of this country actually says about the residency requirements of senators. The Constitution is, after all, the owner's manual for running the government. It states, "He shall be resident in the Province for which he is appointed". That is simple. Therefore I will ask this again. Did the Prime Minister make sure Mike Duffy met that requirement before he appointed him to the Senate; yes or no?

• (1425)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, according to constitutional practice, all senators must make such a declaration. As members know, it is Mr. Duffy's actions that are before the court right now. The government has been assisting the RCMP and the Crown in its prosecution of this particular case, but obviously I am not going to comment on the merits of the case or any testimony before the court.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let us look at what the Prime Minister actually thinks about Mike Duffy's actions:

To Duff, a great journalist and a great senator. Thanks for being one of my best, hardest-working appointments ever.

As a senator, Mike Duffy never put forward a single piece of legislation. What great, hard work was the Prime Minister actually referring to?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the House knows, Mr. Duffy has since been charged with a number of offences. We have been working with the police and the Crown on these matters. I am not going to comment on those.

Just as another example, I am sure that the leader of the NDP works very hard. That does not entitle him to take \$3 million of public money, to which his party was not entitled, and use it for illegal purposes.

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THE BUDGET

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada is a great country because we believe in building a better country for our kids and grandkids than the one we inherited from our parents and grandparents. Incredibly, the Minister of Finance said yesterday that

his TFSA increase for the rich will be paid for by the next generation of Canadians.

He said: "...why don't we leave that to [the Prime Minister's] granddaughter to solve that problem."

Since when does Canada burden our grandchildren instead of building for them?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, the Minister of Finance was clearly dismissing a preposterous argument because balancing the budget is good for future generations.

Cutting taxes and allowing people to save and keep money in their own pockets is good for future generations. Giving to money to Canadian families, so they can raise their children is good for future generations.

I noticed yesterday, and everybody noticed, the leader of the Liberal Party was condemning tax cuts for small businesses claiming that they are all rich. Small businesses are the backbone of our economy and we are proud to cut taxes.

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is paying for doubling the TFSA contribution limit by cutting old age security for seniors. We know from evidence at the Mike Duffy trial that even his Conservative caucus is uncomfortable with this old age security cut.

Why is the Prime Minister taking \$28,000 from our most vulnerable seniors to pay for his tax break for the rich?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is, of course, completely false. The government has not taken a dime from seniors. On the contrary, this government brought in the single biggest increase to the guaranteed income supplement in a quarter of a century and the Liberal Party voted against it.

This government brought in income splitting for Canadian pensioners. That party voted against it and that party has, in the past, threatened to take it away from our seniors.

One party and one party alone stands for middle-class Canadians and seniors, and that is this party. We are going to fight them every step of the way.

• (1430)

[Translation]

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, by increasing the contribution limit for tax-free savings accounts, the Prime Minister is giving even more money to those who need it the least.

How is he getting the money to do that? By making cuts to old age security, something that even his own caucus finds extremely worrisome.

Why is the Prime Minister giving tax breaks to the most wealthy rather than helping people in the middle class who need it? When will he introduce a plan that helps the middle class?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is completely false.

Oral Questions

It is the Liberal Party that wants to raise taxes for middle-class families, middle-class seniors, middle-class consumers and SMEs in this country.

We have lowered taxes. Tax-free savings accounts are used by middle-class seniors, and we have increased the annual contribution limit. That is a good policy for seniors.

We will always resist the Liberal Party's attempts to take away income splitting from seniors.

* * *

ETHICS

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister keeps telling us that the rules for appointing senators have been clear for 150 years.

However, when he appointed Mike Duffy to be a Conservative senator, Mr. Duffy had been living in Ottawa since 1971. He had an Ontario driver's licence, and his passport indicated that his permanent residence was in—you guessed it—Ottawa. Nevertheless, the Prime Minister still appointed Mike Duffy to be a Conservative senator representing Prince Edward Island.

Can the Prime Minister tell us today what ancient magical rule dating back 150 years made Mike Duffy a resident of Prince Edward Island?

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I already said, the constitutional practice on this has been clear for nearly 150 years. What is also very clear is that it is against the rules of the House to use taxpayers' money for partisan purposes.

[English]

This particular member owes Canadian taxpayers \$122,122 for illegal offices in Montreal. He is not alone of course. He is joined by the member for Scarborough Southwest who took it to a bigger level at over \$140,000, not to be outdone by the Leader of the Opposition who owes taxpayers \$400,000.

I suggest they pay it back.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that was not Parliament's finest hour.

We are talking about the role of the prime minister, as defined by the Senate, in determining the eligibility requirements for Mike Duffy. What we find is that the Crown attorney says that Duffy did not meet those eligibility requirements, which is why he is up on fraud charges.

The Deloitte auditors also found that Mike Duffy in Kanata did not meet those requirements, yet the Prime Minister's Office intervened to try and have the issue of residency whitewashed out of the audit. If these rules of 150 years were so clear, why was it whitewashing the audit? Why did it allow Mike Duffy to sit in the Senate when he clearly was not eligible to represent Prince Edward Island?

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what we are seeing again today is the Liberals trying to make a

victim out of Mike Duffy. Mike Duffy is responsible for his actions and he is facing those actions in front of a court.

He is absolutely right that it is not the finest hour for Parliament when the members for Trois-Rivières, Honoré-Mercier, Jeanne-Le Ber, Pierrefonds—Dollard, Louis-Hébert, Gatineau, Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, Hochelaga, Saint-Jean, Berthier—Maskinongé, Ri-mouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, Davenport, Drummond, and Trinity—Spadina are just part of the crew that owe \$2.7—

The Speaker: Order. I know it is a Wednesday, but the noise level is getting rather elevated. I will ask members to come to order to allow members to both put the questions and answer them.

The hon. member for Newton—North Delta.

* * *

THE BUDGET

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, while Conservatives like Mike Duffy got to live large on the taxpayers' dime, ordinary Canadians are feeling squeezed, and yesterday's budget provides them with little relief.

In nine years, the Conservatives have failed to create a single child care space. The budget offers costly tax breaks for the wealthiest Canadians, the top 15%. Families desperately need help with child care costs that are breaking the family budget.

Why has the government abandoned middle-class families?

● (1435)

Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Conservative government tabled a low-tax plan for jobs and families. We know that the New Democratic Party wants a high-tax plan for middle class families. It wants high taxes for middle class seniors. It wants high taxes for middle class consumers. That is its plan. High taxes on everything. High taxes on the middle class.

Our Conservative government has reduced taxes on the middle class. We put \$6,600 back in the pockets of the average Canadian family of four. The NDP wants to take that money out.

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative budget shows that the government still does not understand that a strong Canada requires strong cities. Under this budget, desperately needed public transit funding is still years away, and even then, it is a slow ramp-up to meaningful dollars, all of it complicated by red tape and many strings attached.

Why do multi-billion dollar income splitting handouts to the wealthier few start immediately while the vast majority of Canadians are left waiting for the bus?

Oral Questions

Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Conservative government tabled a budget, a low-tax budget for families and jobs. However, we know that the New Democrats want high taxes on the middle class. They want high taxes on families. They want high taxes on middle class seniors. They want high taxes on middle class consumers.

That is their plan. That is their strategy: high taxes on everything and high taxes on the middle class.

Our government has reduced taxes. We will continue to reduce taxes on the middle class. We have put over \$6,000 back into the pockets of Canadian families. They will take it way.

Canadians know they are better off with this Conservative government.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is clear that their priority is giving gifts to the wealthy instead of helping the middle class.

The Conservatives had an opportunity to invest in our cities to promote public transit and help repair our bridges and roads. The provinces are outraged. The Government of Quebec is saying that the funds allocated to infrastructure in the Conservatives' budget are woefully inadequate.

Why are the Conservatives giving gifts to the wealthy instead of investing in our infrastructure?

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of State (Small Business and Tourism, and Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday we tabled a balanced budget that lowers taxes for all Canadians. I remind the opposition that it wants to increase taxes for the middle class, seniors and small businesses.

On this side of the House, we know that we can create wealth by lowering taxes for people and putting money back in their pockets. That is quite clear and that is what is most important. The opposition believes in and even glorifies big government, and it puts down Canadians. We believe in Canadians, and we are putting money back in their pockets.

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[*English*]

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is a budget that is failing another generation of first nations, Métis and Inuit children with inadequate funding for basic services like child welfare, education and health.

We should all know that no matter where children live in Canada, they should have access to quality education, but the Conservatives are more focused on blaming indigenous communities for their own failure with Bill C-33.

Why is the Prime Minister not honouring his pledge to invest \$1.9 billion to bridge the education gap that first nations in Canada tragically face?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter

is that unlike the Liberals and New Democrats, whose mantra is to increase taxes for every Canadian family, we on this side of the House believe that they should get the money back in their pockets.

As a matter of fact, we are focused on the priorities of all Canadians. The economic action plan 2015 will help create jobs, spur economic growth, and ensure the long-term prosperity of all Canadians, including aboriginals.

* * *

• (1440)

[*Translation*]

THE BUDGET

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it reeks of petty political revenge.

The minister's numbers are nothing but smoke and mirrors. All this budget will do is maintain the status quo. The National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations called the federal budget a “missed opportunity” and “one of the weakest for First Nations”.

Abandoning yet another generation of this country's first peoples—is that what a balanced budget means to the Conservatives?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, unlike the Liberals and the white-collar socialists in the NDP, our government is focused on Canadians' priorities. This economic action plan will help create jobs and new wealth and ensure the long-term prosperity of all Canadians, including aboriginal Canadians.

Economic action plan 2015 makes strategic investments in major initiatives intended to improve the well-being of first nations by enabling them to benefit fully from Canada's economic prosperity.

[*English*]

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this budget puts a burden on future generations, and the Minister of Finance has admitted it.

Today is Earth Day, but climate change, one of the biggest threats to future generations, is not in the budget, which is not surprising. Environment Canada's main estimates cut climate change funding by 26% and the report on plans and priorities slashes climate change staff by 54% next year. Meanwhile, our emissions keep growing, no matter what the Minister of the Environment says.

Why is the government making our children and our grandchildren pay for its inaction on climate change?

Oral Questions

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of the Environment, Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and Minister for the Arctic Council, CPC): Mr. Speaker, no federal government has done more for the environment than this one. Budget 2015 is investing in the chemicals management plan, federal contaminated sites, species at risk, meteorological and navigational warning services in the Arctic for safe marine transportation in the Arctic.

The NDP and the Liberals, however, want to hike taxes for all Canadians.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it would be comical if the results were not so tragic.

Yesterday, when asked about the huge cost of his spending promises to future generations, the Minister of Finance actually said, and I will quote for my Conservative friends, “Why don't we leave that to [the] Prime Minister's granddaughter to solve that problem”. We could not make this stuff up.

If one is already rich, then yesterday was a good-news budget, but young families looking for affordable child care are not a Conservative priority. Single moms working for minimum wage are not a Conservative priority. The 1.3 million Canadians out of work must not be one of the Conservative target groups.

Do the Conservatives actually believe it is a good idea to burden our grandkids with their multi-billion dollar election pandering?

Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister was dismissing a claim by the opposition that was preposterous.

Yesterday we tabled a balanced budget, a low-tax budget, for Canadians. We know that the opposition would place high taxes on middle-class families. They would raise taxes on middle-class seniors. They would raise taxes on middle-class teachers. They would raise taxes on middle-class nurses. They would raise taxes on consumers. That is their plan: high taxes. Theirs is a high-tax plan.

Our Conservative government is reducing taxes to the middle class. Our family tax cut supports—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Bourassa.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives' agenda for seniors is deeply misguided in this budget. For one thing, doubling the TFSA limit will benefit only the rich. Very few families can sock away \$20,000 per year, and this measure will cost Canadians a fortune. For another, the Conservatives are robbing seniors of up to \$28,000 by increasing the age at which they can start collecting old age security to 67.

Why are the Conservatives still making the rich richer at the expense of the middle class and seniors?

• (1445)

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of State (Small Business and Tourism, and Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is utterly false. The fact is that we are reducing taxes for seniors and reducing taxes for entrepreneurs, including entrepreneurs in Beauce, Quebec and across Canada. We are putting money back in their pockets so they can stimulate the economy. In contrast, the opposition thinks that a

big government that spends money it does not have and racks up debt for future generations will stimulate the economy. That is not true. It would actually slow the economy.

[*English*]

Ms. Chrystia Freeland (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, “multipliers for infrastructure spending...are...high. In contrast, a reduction in personal income taxes has a considerably lower multiplier...”. Those are not my words. That is the sound economic argument laid out by Jim Flaherty in his 2009 budget.

Could the current minister explain why he is ignoring this wise advice and handing out tax breaks to the rich instead of investing seriously in infrastructure and the economic growth middle-class Canadians so urgently need?

Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Liberal leader said that the government was spending money on income splitting. Whose money is this anyway? We are putting money back into the pockets of Canadian families. They want to spend it before they can even receive it as revenue. Shame on the government—

Hon. Kevin Sorenson: —or shame on the Liberal Party. We know that we will do everything to cut taxes to middle-class families. We will lower taxes for middle-class seniors. We will lower taxes for middle-class consumers. Canadians know that they are better off with this Conservative government.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: If we keep spending time waiting for the House to come to order we might lose questions later on. Order.

The hon. member for Kings—Hants.

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, shame on the government, indeed, for doubling the TFSA is irresponsible. In a few short years, the costs will be over \$1 billion a year, but then by 2040, it will be over \$10 billion per year. Yesterday, the Minister of Finance admitted that this a problem and he said, “Why don't we leave that to [the] Prime Minister's granddaughter to solve that problem”.

Does the Prime Minister agree with his finance minister that fiscal sustainability is a problem for his granddaughter's generation and not for him? Why is he putting a reverse home mortgage on Canada's fiscal house to pay for his election giveaways to the rich?

Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister was dismissing a claim that was preposterous by the opposition. Half of tax-free savings account holders earn less than \$42,000 a year. Some 600,000 seniors with incomes below \$60,000 are currently maximizing the tax-free savings account room and will benefit by the measure.

We know that the Liberal Party would take away the tax-free savings account. We know the Liberals want higher taxes on middle-class families. We know they want higher taxes on middle-class seniors. We know they want higher taxes on middle-class consumers.

Tax-free savings accounts are a measure brought forward by this government to help Canadians save. It is working.

* * *

[Translation]

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Mylène Freeman (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, NDP): Mr. Speaker, pay equity, affordable child care and concrete solutions to address violence against women were left out of yesterday's budget.

The Conservatives' incompetence is not only creating further disparity, it is also widening the gap between men and women. Canada currently ranks 19th in the world in that regard. It is time we had a budget centred around a gender-based analysis, a budget that would advance the equality of women.

Why did the Conservative decide to do the opposite?

[English]

Hon. K. Kellie Leitch (Minister of Labour and Minister of Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government has been very focused on what matters to Canadians, particularly Canadian women, making sure they have a job and making sure that we are growing our economy. Yesterday's budget, if the member will take a moment to look at it, supports an action plan for women entrepreneurs. It supports a number of initiatives that specifically make sure that women are equal in this economy.

I would encourage the opposition members to vote with us. They seem to vote against everything for women. This time is an opportunity for them to support what we are doing.

* * *

HOUSING

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in addition to ignoring women, the budget also ignores Canada's affordable housing crisis. According to estimates by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, almost 200,000 social housing units will lose funding over the next five years, and hundreds of thousands of Canadians are waiting for new social housing units, including 100,000 families in Toronto alone. However, yesterday's budget did not announce any money to renew lost funding or build new units.

Why will the government not commit to being a predictable, long-term housing partner?

● (1450)

Hon. Candice Bergen (Minister of State (Social Development), CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to ensuring that Canadians have access to affordable, secure housing. We reaffirmed that commitment in budget 2015. On top of that, we also are giving substantial funds to co-op and non-profit housing groups that are

Oral Questions

now able to renegotiate their mortgages with no penalty. This is something they have been asking for. They are tangible results.

We are listening to housing providers. We are not listening to the high-tax, high-spend opposition that would increase taxes even on vulnerable Canadians. We want to make their lives more affordable.

[Translation]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative budget has once again failed those most in need.

While the cost of housing has reached record highs in our largest cities, the government is sweeping the problem under the rug. It refuses to invest to build new social housing units—and the worst is yet to come. Long-term agreements are expiring, and the Conservatives still have not committed to renewing the funding.

Why does the government refuse to be a reliable partner for social housing and to make long-term investments in our communities?

[English]

Hon. Candice Bergen (Minister of State (Social Development), CPC): Mr. Speaker, listen to what Nicholas Gazzard, the executive director of the Co-operative Housing Federation said just yesterday about our announcement: “This is very good news. The elimination of prepayment fees will make a real difference to housing co-ops” across the country.

We are going to listen to the people who are providing housing. We are going to give them the solutions they are asking for. At the same time, Canadians across the country are looking for their lives to be more affordable. We are keeping taxes low on the middle class. Opposition members want to raise taxes on middle-class Canadians.

* * *

[Translation]

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance himself admits that this budget will burden future generations. It is truly incredible.

The budget is just another fine example of the Conservatives' lack of understanding of the agriculture and agri-food sector. A 25% budget cut for the Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food over the next few years means sacrificing services for producers and the agriculture sector.

Why does the minister not support producers or the growth of the agri-food sector?

Oral Questions

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of State (Small Business and Tourism, and Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, the agri-food sector, farmers, small business owners and Canada's middle class, everyone benefits from this budget because we are lowering their taxes. It is simple. What the NDP wants to do is clear: it wants to spend money that we do not have and give it to public servants who will create inefficient programs.

We are giving money to business owners and Canadians. We are helping them create wealth and that is why with us the future is stable and with the opposition it is unstable.

* * *

[English]

THE BUDGET

Ms. Joan Crockatt (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday in this House I was elated to see the Minister of Finance table economic action plan 2015, a balanced budget. This prudent document lays out a plan for future growth and opportunity. It was the result of hard work and of unwavering focus, and also a result of firm resolve. Budgets do not balance themselves.

This budget is reducing taxes on middle-income families, on seniors and on consumers. Could the Minister of State for Social Development please tell this House what this budget is actually doing for our middle-class families?

Hon. Candice Bergen (Minister of State (Social Development), CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have balanced the budget, and we are supporting families through our enhanced universal child care benefit, our family tax cut and the new home accessibility tax credit. Overall, these measures will save the average family \$6,600 a year.

As University of Windsor Professor Lydia Miljan pointed out, "every Canadian is going to see something" because the economic action plan is "helping everybody".

Across the country, groups, experts, families and sectors are supporting this budget because it is putting money back in the pockets of everyday Canadians.

* * *

[Translation]

LABOUR

Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the budget is passing on a burden to future generations.

For years, the NDP has been calling on the Conservatives to give unpaid interns protections under the Canada Labour Code against sexual harassment and dangerous and abusive working conditions. Yesterday's budget is a step in that direction, but important questions about how this will be implemented remain unanswered. If the Conservatives are serious about this, will they support my bill to protect unpaid interns this evening?

• (1455)

[English]

Hon. K. Kellie Leitch (Minister of Labour and Minister of Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to be very clear. Economic action plan 2015, as stated in the budget yesterday,

supports our Conservative government and the Canada Labour Code to ensure that interns under federal jurisdiction, regardless of pay, receive occupational health and safety supports.

Really, what the issue is here is the New Democratic Party wants to raise taxes on middle-income Canadians, on middle-income consumers.

Our party is about lowering taxes. I encourage those members to get on board.

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday at 2:30 p.m., the Minister of Labour got up and said that interns are already protected under the Canada Labour Code. Then at 4:30 p.m., the Minister of Finance tabled a budget that will extend, in the Canada Labour Code, rights and protections for interns.

Like the minister of unpaid labour, this budget is long on spin and short on details, but luckily there is the NDP's intern protection act. We could pass this bill tonight. We could do the job for unpaid interns if we got the support.

Will the government support our bill to protect unpaid interns?

Hon. K. Kellie Leitch (Minister of Labour and Minister of Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me state what I said yesterday, like I have said before, this government is committed to the safety of all workers.

In economic action plan 2015, as stated yesterday, and I can cite the page number if the member wants, we are committed to making sure that unpaid interns are safe and protected in the workplace.

* * *

MARINE ATLANTIC

Mr. Ryan Cleary (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are raiding the emergency fund to give billions to the wealthiest instead of helping average Canadians. Take Marine Atlantic as an example. After being told yesterday to "wait for the budget", there was nothing in the budget to address the massive cuts that the Conservatives have made to the ferry service.

Will the minister come clean and admit that the Conservatives are moving ahead with an 85% cut to the critical transportation link that the people and the economy of Newfoundland and Labrador cannot live without?

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Yesterday, Mr. Speaker, what I indicated was that the estimates were just that, they were the estimates, and that if the member wanted to speculate on what was in the budget, he did not have much longer to wait. They are two separate issues.

With respect to Marine Atlantic, we greatly support the functioning of that very important link between Newfoundland and Labrador. In fact, I guess that is a good point to point out as well. For the men and women who work on Marine Atlantic, they will very much enjoy having lower taxes and greater benefits as a result of this government, as opposed to higher taxes and less help they would get from an opposition like that.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the finance minister openly admitted the budget would put a burden on future generations, which is just unacceptable. However, the irony that a budget that does not even mention climate change was introduced a day before Earth Day is not lost on British Columbians.

There are no significant investments in housing or infrastructure, no reversal of cuts to the Coast Guard, yet today the Conservatives are busy congratulating themselves, despite the fact that last month alone B.C. lost 5,700 full-time jobs.

Why are the Conservatives abandoning B.C.?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of the Environment, Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and Minister for the Arctic Council, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government's record is very clear when it comes to greenhouse gas emissions. We have reduced greenhouse gas emissions, while growing the economy and creating good-paying jobs. We will continue to implement a responsible sector-by-sector regulatory process aligned with the United States. Canada's economic competitiveness is protected.

Our government is also the first one in Canadian history to reduce greenhouse gas emissions on a net basis, and will continue to do so without the job-killing carbon tax.

* * *

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Trinity—Spadina, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, cities and towns across the country had hoped that the finance minister was taking the extra time to write a budget so he could rethink this crazy notion of deferring infrastructure spending until the Tories were out of office. He did not. That means cities like Calgary, Vancouver and Toronto that got no money last year will, once again, get no money this year.

On housing, there is not one new dollar for new housing to shelter people. Housing does not just fight poverty; it builds cities and protects people.

Why has the government turned its back on cities and why is it turning its back on vulnerable people?

● (1500)

Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday this government tabled a low-tax budget to create jobs and a low-tax budget for families. Measures in that budget were praised by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, by the mayors of Toronto, Vancouver, Quebec City, Winnipeg, Ottawa, Edmonton,

Oral Questions

Calgary and the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. The list goes on and on.

It was a very good budget. It was a good budget for small and medium-sized business. It was a good budget for families. We encourage the Liberal Party to vote with the government and support a good budget for the—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Trinity—Spadina.

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Trinity—Spadina, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can assure the minister that the mayors were praising the 2017 budget and the 2019 budget, not this year's budget.

On transit, the government is not just doing nothing, it is doing next to nothing, and it will be doing nothing for two whole years. It is ridiculous. The minister is telling folks that they are actually going to be stuck in transit waiting for a bus for two years, and it is never going to come if it keeps this up.

Gridlock costs the country's economy billions of dollars. The delayed budget and the delayed funding is not helping Canadians get to work. The drive-by budget has literally missed the bus.

When will the government fund transit and why will it not fund it this year?

Mr. Peter Braid (Parliamentary Secretary for Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, under our Conservative government, Canada has led G7 countries with respect to investments in infrastructure. We are taking a leadership role with respect to federal infrastructure. Provinces and municipalities have never had a stronger partner, and yesterday's budget announcement of a dedicated public transit fund only adds to that record of accomplishment.

Our investments in infrastructure are three times greater than the previous Liberal government. The Liberal plan for infrastructure is to hike taxes on the middle class.

* * *

[Translation]

VETERANS

Mr. Sylvain Chicoine (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in true Conservative style, this budget goes nowhere and does not offer any solutions to veterans' demands.

The budget simply contains old announcements that were already in their previous budget. It was not even worth wasting ink and paper on that. Veterans deserve better.

Why does the minister refuse to reopen the regional service offices and to give veterans the services that they are demanding and that they deserve?

Oral Questions

[English]

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our budget yesterday, like Bill C-58 before the House, shows our tremendous obligation to our veterans and their families. That budget documents our spending on the retirement income security benefit, the critical injury benefit and the family caregiver relief benefit, addressing our most seriously injured and the stress and strain of those injuries on the family.

The time is now for less rhetoric by that member and to get behind not only Bill C-58 but this budget.

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on a quick trip to the Memorial Chamber people will understand the phrase that growing old is a privilege denied to so many. However, on page 274 of the budget, for the veteran who makes \$62,000, when he or she turns 65 that goes to \$27,000. The Conservatives' budget would increase that to \$43,000.

My question is for the Prime Minister and the Government of Canada.. When veterans turn 65 years old, why will they still lose money under the Conservative government?

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that member is on the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, and last June a unique thing happened. All parties on that committee came together to support changes to the new veterans charter. Their third recommendation was for seriously disabled veterans to receive financial benefits for life and an appropriate portion to a surviving spouse.

That is what the retirement income security benefit does. It provides that certainty. That is why veterans are behind it. That is why the ombudsman has praised it as one of the most urgent new veterans charter issues.

Who is standing in front of it? The only member of that committee who voted for the new veterans charter, the member for Sackville—Eastern Shore.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Daryl Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings, CPC): Mr. Speaker, national security is an issue that is top of mind for my constituents in Prince Edward—Hastings and certainly all across Canada.

Could the Minister of National Defence update the House on what the budget introduced in the House by our government would do to ensure that our Canadian Armed Forces are ready to respond in the defence of Canada both at home and abroad?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his commitment to the Canadian Armed Forces.

We recall that when the Liberals were in office they slashed the budget for the Canadian Armed Forces. We had the decade of darkness.

Under this Prime Minister's leadership, we have rebuilt the capabilities of our military, increasing the National Defence budget

by 27% today, massive important new acquisitions and new equipment.

In yesterday's budget, we had a historic commitment to an enormous long-term, stable, predictable increase in funding for our men and women in uniform that would amount to nearly \$12 billion over the course of a decade. This government is standing with our men and women in uniform.

* * *

● (1505)

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-sor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the wake of the oil spill on the west coast, we still have a problem on the east coast regarding the *Manolis L* sunken freighter. It continues to spill oil and will potentially be a major disaster.

Here is the latest. Kevin Stowbridge, a naval architect and engineer, has said that the oil has to be removed. He says, "By today's standards", the ship's hull "is paper thin". He says that cracks are developing and they will spread, leading to "a catastrophic structural failure that could release the oil".

Finally, once again, will she save our shorelines? Would the minister please clean up this mess as a permanent solution?

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can assure the hon. member that the Coast Guard continues to regularly monitor the *Manolis L* site with Canadian Coast Guard vessels and Transport Canada aerial surveillance. As recently as this morning, we were out there.

Should conditions change, the Coast Guard is prepared to move swiftly and take further action as necessary. I can assure the hon. member that I have instructed Coast Guard officials to review long-term options for the *Manolis L*.

If environmental response is important to the member, he will support our budget.

* * *

[Translation]

INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, once again, the Conservatives' budget ignores Quebec.

I will give a few examples. With this budget, the Conservatives have confirmed their cuts to health transfers; they have given us nothing but recycled announcements of funding for infrastructure; and they have confirmed that cuts to employment insurance will continue to hurt regional economies.

Can we truly believe that a Conservative government would one day be able to govern and take into account the needs and expectations of Quebec?

Routine Proceedings

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of State (Small Business and Tourism, and Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, what do Quebecers want? Quebecers want more money in their pockets.

We have lowered taxes for Quebecers. What does the Government of Quebec want? It wants a federal government that respects the Canadian Constitution. We respect the Canadian Constitution. There are no squabbles. Under the leadership of our Prime Minister we have constitutional peace. What do Quebecers want? They want stability—not instability under the NDP, which wants to make Quebecers' taxes even higher.

We increased transfers to the provinces. It is untrue to say that transfers were cut; they were increased. Quebec receives \$20 billion in transfers.

* * *

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Brad Butt (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the international jihadi movement has declared war on Canada and her allies. We have seen horrific terrorist attacks against two Canadian Armed Forces members. Our Conservative government took strong action by bringing forward the anti-terrorism act 2015 to combat the jihadi threat.

Could the Minister of Public Safety please update the House on what financial resources economic action plan 2015 will allocate to this fight against terrorism?

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Mississauga—Streetsville for working to make his community safer and for reaching out to the leader of his community. Over the course of the last week he has been supportive of our anti-terrorism measures.

We always said that we would provide the tools and the resources. Yesterday, in the budget, we announced \$300 million for our police officers so they can keep us safe. Despite the lack of support of the opposition, this government will stand up to keep Canadians safe.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the majority of Albertans have called for action on climate change, yet the budget commits nothing. Instead, the government has clawed back spending on renewable energy and energy efficiency. It refuses, stubbornly, to impose greenhouse gas standards on oil and gas. It has ignored the calls by Albertans to diversify our economy away from reliance on oil revenue.

Why zero investment in this budget for a diversified, clean energy economy for Alberta and Canada?

• (1510)

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of the Environment, Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and Minister for the Arctic Council, CPC): Mr. Speaker, no federal

budget has done more for the environment. Let me outline some of the initiatives in budget 2015.

The 2015 budget includes initiatives for a chemicals management plan, federal contaminated sites, species at risk, meteorological and navigational warning services in the Arctic, and safe marine transportation in the Arctic. The NDP, however, wants to hike taxes for Canadians.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-François Larose (Repentigny, FD): Mr. Speaker, the day after the tabling of a budget that completely ignores the environment, Earth Day is all the more important.

Our quality of life and the environment are elements of wealth. Investing in the environment provides the best return on capital. The Minister of Finance is still basing his decisions on archaic measurements.

The World Bank recommends including natural capital in the calculation of GDP to make it a fair and responsible indicator, as we in Forces et démocratie will be proposing in a motion.

Will the government use modern calculations?

[English]

Mr. Peter Braid (Parliamentary Secretary for Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned previously, in yesterday's balanced budget, our Conservative government announced a dedicated public transit fund, for the first time ever, moving forward \$1 billion every year to support municipalities with their public transit needs. Like never before, this government is getting it done.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[Translation]

**AGREEMENT ON LAND, RAIL, MARINE AND AIR
TRANSPORT PRECLEARANCE**

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I would like to table, in both official languages, the treaty entitled “Agreement on Land, Rail, Marine and Air Transport Preclearance between the Government of Canada and the Government of the United States of America”, signed in Washington on March 16, 2015.

[English]

An explanatory memorandum is included with the treaty.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-François Fortin: Mr. Speaker, today, in honour of Earth Day, I am seeking unanimous consent to move the following motion:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should take the necessary steps to integrate into the calculation of GDP a natural capital accounting system, as recommended by the World Bank's WAVES project:

Routine Proceedings

by recognizing that Canada's natural resources, such as forests, water, earth, air, minerals and other energy sources, are vital to the economy and recognizing the delicate relationship between economic progress, the health of the environment and the well-being of the population;

by recognizing that GDP is not an appropriate indicator for responsible decision-making;

by re-evaluating how the common well-being and the progress of Canada's economy are measured;

and finally, by committing to examine the implementation of a natural capital accounting system in Canada and look into the possibility of integrating such a system into the calculation of GDP to encourage true growth of the green economy and long-term progress in terms of prosperity and common well-being.

[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.

The Speaker: There does not seem to be consent.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Trinity—Spadina, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. During question period, a member opposite, I believe it was the member speaking on behalf of the Prime Minister, referenced the riding of Trinity—Spadina and its member having used funds illegally and using taxpayers' dollars to fund offices in Quebec.

I want to assure the House that I have never done that. The member for Trinity—Spadina has not opened offices in Quebec, has never been brought forward with these charges, and has never even been asked to explain any of these charges. I do not know why my riding and I were referenced in such a way.

I would like the comment withdrawn, please.

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I cannot confirm whether or not he did actually pay for NDP offices in Montreal. I was referencing the former member for Trinity—Spadina, who actually did that.

As a result, I withdraw that accusation against the particular member and put it back onto the former NDP member for Trinity—Spadina.

* * *

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 14 petitions.

● (1515)

[Translation]

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): 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 delegation of the Canada-Africa Parliamentary Association respecting its bilateral mission to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the Republic of Djibouti from October 13 to 17, 2014, and its bilateral mission to the Kingdom of Lesotho and the Republic of Malawi from January 19 to 22, 2015.

[English]

Mr. Gordon Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, four reports of the Canadian delegation of the Canada-United States Inter-Parliamentary Group .

The first concerns the U.S. congressional meetings that were held in Washington D.C., United States, February 24-26, 2014.

The second concerns the Canadian/American Border Trade Alliance, BTA, conference that was held here in Ottawa, May 4-6, 2014.

The third concerns the 2014 annual summer meeting of the National Governors Association that was held in Nashville, Tennessee, United States, July 10-13, 2014.

The fourth concerns the 69th annual meeting of the Council of State Governments Midwestern Legislative Conference that was held in Omaha, Nebraska, United States, July 12-16, 2014.

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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 36th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. The committee advises that pursuant to Standing Order 91.1 (2) the Subcommittee on Private Members' Business met to consider the items added to the order of precedent as a result of the replenishment on Monday, March 30 and recommended that the items listed herein, which it has determined should not be designated not votable, be considered by the House.

The Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 91.1(2), the report is deemed adopted.

INDUSTRY, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology in relation to Bill S-4, an act to amend the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act and to make a consequential amendment to another act. The committee has studied the bill and has decided to report the bill back to the House without amendment.

Routine Proceedings

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

GENOCIDE RECOGNITION

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there have been consultations among the parties and I believe that if you seek it you will find unanimous consent for the following.

I move:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, in relation to Motion M-587 on genocide recognition, standing on the Order Paper in the name of the Member for Mississauga—Streetsville, the House may continue to sit beyond the ordinary hour of daily adjournment on Friday, April 24, 2015, to consider the motion and that after 60 minutes of debate, or when no Member rises to speak, whichever is the earlier, the Speaker shall put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the motion.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

PETITIONS

PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to table a petition signed by hundreds of people in my hometown of Hamilton who are opposed to Bill C-51. The petitioners agree that terrorism is a real threat and must be confronted, but they also agree that, instead of making Canadians safer, Bill C-51 is dangerous, vague and likely ineffective. Instead of passing Bill C-51, which would threaten our rights and freedoms by giving CSIS sweeping new surveillance powers without proper oversight to prevent abuse, the petitioners agree with New Democrats that we cannot protect our freedoms by sacrificing them. For all of those reasons, the petitioners call upon the House of Commons to stop the attack on civil liberties and join the NDP by voting down Bill C-51.

While the rules of the House do not allow me to endorse a petition, let me conclude by saying that I am delighted to have so many residents of Hamilton Mountain get actively engaged in this important petition campaign.

● (1520)

KOMAGATA MARU

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure that I rise today to table a petition signed by members of the Sikh Society of Manitoba who are clearly indicating that the *Komagata Maru* incident was a dark moment in Canada's past when, in 1914, 352 passengers aboard the steamship were denied entry into Canada based on a discriminatory immigration policy. The ship was forced to return to India and as a result 19 passengers were killed.

The petitioners are asking for a formal apology by the Government of Canada to be presented here, on the floor of the House of Commons.

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by constituents in my riding of Halifax, around Nova Scotia and a few from Newfoundland for good measure. It is a petition to end violence against women. The petitioners note that women are 11 times more likely than men to be victims of sexual offences, that indigenous women are 7 times more likely to be murdered than non-indigenous women in Canada and that 60% of women with disabilities in Canada are likely to experience some form of violence in their lifetime. Therefore, the petitioners are asking the Government of Canada to create a coordinated comprehensive national plan to address violence against women, and launch an independent national inquiry into the deaths and disappearances of first nations, Metis and Inuit women. The petitioners and I look forward to the minister's response.

NUCLEAR WASTE

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present. The first petition is from hundreds of citizens who are concerned about Ontario Power Generation's proposal to construct a deep geological repository on Lake Huron in the Great Lakes. This affects an estimated 40 million Canadians and Americans, and will cost \$7 billion. The petitioners are calling for a more robust review process because the proposal would put radioactive nuclear waste next to our freshwater supply as well as a commercial artery that is important to our country.

WINDSOR-DETROIT BRIDGE

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my second set of petitions are for the creation of an international bike and pedestrian lane on the new crossing between Windsor and Detroit. The petitioners request this to be part of the project so that we can increase ecotourism, have stronger cultural, economic and development connections with the city of Detroit, and be able to access the system in the United States as well as on the Canadian side.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, on this Earth Day, I am pleased to rise to present three petitions. One is from residents throughout the Vancouver area calling for a legislated ban on dilbit supertankers along the B.C. coastline.

GENETICALLY MODIFIED FOODS

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from residents primarily in the Montreal area as well as in Ottawa and Whitby, calling for the mandatory labelling of genetically modified products.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, my last petition is a timely concern from residents throughout Ontario, outside of Toronto as well as in areas of Ottawa calling for this House to reject the so-called anti-terrorism bill, Bill C-51.

Routine Proceedings

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present today. The first petition is on behalf of hundreds of constituents in Parkdale—High Park calling for the government to stop the attack on our civil liberties by voting down bill C-51.

The petitioners agree that terrorism is a threat that must be confronted, but rather than making Canadians safer, the Conservatives are playing politics with Bill C-51 and that it is dangerous, vague and ineffective by giving CSIS sweeping new powers without proper oversight.

They are calling on the House of Commons to stop this attack on our civil liberties and join the NDP in voting down Bill C-51.

CHILD CARE

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is in support of the NDP's plan for affordable child care. It notes that after a decade of Conservative government, child care costs are soaring. I know in my riding, I speak to constituents who are paying thousands of dollars each and every month for child care. They know that early child care, early learning programs provide the best start in life for kids, and it also strengthens our economy.

These constituents are supporting the NDP plan for quality affordable child care spaces at a maximum of \$15 a day. They are calling on the Government of Canada to work with the provinces and territories to implement the NDP plan for affordable child care in Canada.

GENETICALLY MODIFIED FOODS

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition in support of labelling of genetically modified foods. The signatories to the petition wish to point the attention of the House to the right of all Canadians to make informed choices when purchasing products.

They call upon the Government of Canada to introduce mandatory labelling of products containing ingredients that have been genetically modified, and to undertake a balanced approach to the use of genetically modified organisms that considers the health and sustainability of our environment and communities, the protection of biodiversity and of course the economic interests of farmers.

* * *

• (1525)

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 1093, 1096 and 1099.

[Text]

Question No. 1093—**Hon. Irwin Cotler:**

With regard to Bill C-51, An Act to Enact the Security of Canada Information Sharing Act and the Secure Air Travel Act, to Amend the Criminal Code, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act and the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act and to Make Related and Consequential Amendments to Other Acts: (a) what studies, reports, or other documents were consulted by the government as part of the process of developing the legislation; (b) what groups or individuals were

consulted by the government as part of the process of developing the legislation; (c) when did each consultation in (a) and (b) occur; (d) who carried out each consultation in (a) and (b); (e) in what way was each group or individual in (b) consulted; (f) by what process was the legislation reviewed to ascertain whether any of its provisions are inconsistent with the purposes and provisions of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms; (g) what officials at the Department of Justice participated in the process in (f); (h) what groups or individuals outside the Department of Justice participated in the process in (f); (i) what changes were made to the legislation as a result of the process in (f); (j) did the government seek opinions from any group or individual outside the Department of Justice about whether any of legislation's provisions are inconsistent with the purposes and provisions of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms; (k) from what groups or individuals did the government seek the opinions in (j); (l) when did the government seek each opinion in (j); (m) when did the government receive each opinion in (j); (n) what was the cost of each opinion in (j); (o) who in the government determined that the legislation is consistent with the purposes and provisions of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms; (p) on what basis did the individual or individuals in (o) make that determination; (q) has the government evaluated the likelihood of any of the legislation's provisions being challenged before the courts; (r) what is the result of the evaluation in (q); (s) on what basis has the government made the evaluation in (q); (t) has the government evaluated the likelihood of any of the legislation's provisions being struck down by the courts; (u) what is the result of the evaluation in (t); (v) on what basis has the government made the evaluation in (t); (w) how much money has been or will be set aside to cover the cost of litigation related to challenges of the legislation before the courts; (x) how did the government determine the amount in (w); (y) when were instructions given regarding the drafting of this legislation; (z) how long did those drafting the legislation have to consider any constitutional impacts of the legislation; (aa) were any constitutional concerns raised during the legislative drafting process and, if so, (i) what were these concerns, (ii) how were they addressed, (iii) by whom were they addressed, (iv) when were they addressed; (bb) apart from any analysis pursuant to section 4.1 of the Department of Justice Act, in what ways did the government assess the constitutionality of this bill; (cc) in what ways did the Minister of Justice undertake to verify this bill's constitutionality; (dd) were any outside legal opinions sought relative to this legislation; (ee) in total, how many employees reviewed this legislation with a specific mandate to ascertain its constitutional compliance; (ff) what are the policy rationales for this legislation; (gg) in what ways did the government consider whether alternative policies might attain the objectives in (ff); (hh) what impact will this legislation have on the provinces and territories; (ii) if any provinces or territories were consulted, (i) when were they consulted, (ii) how were they consulted, (iii) in furtherance of what objective were they consulted; (jj) how much will this legislation cost to implement; (kk) do resources exist to implement this legislation effectively and fully; (ll) what is the basis for the government's response in (kk); (mm) by what means will this legislation be monitored and evaluated for its effectiveness; (nn) by what means and how often will this legislation be reviewed; and (oo) by what metrics will the government determine whether this legislation, once enacted, has made Canadians safer?

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the international jihadist movement has declared war on Canada. Canadians are being targeted by jihadi terrorists simply because they hate our society and the values it represents. The Government of Canada rejects the argument that every time security is discussed, somehow freedoms are threatened. Canadians understand that there can be no liberty without security. Canadians rightly expect the government to protect both, and that is precisely what the *anti-terrorism act, 2015* would do. The fundamental fact is that police and national security agencies are working to protect Canadian rights and freedoms. It is not they who seek to take away freedoms, but rather the jihadi terrorists. Canada will not sit on the sidelines, as some would do, and is instead joining the international coalition in the fight against the so-called Islamic State.

Routine Proceedings

With regard to (f) and (cc), pursuant to the Department of Justice Act, section 4.1, the Minister of Justice is required to examine every government bill presented to Parliament in order to ascertain whether any of its provisions are inconsistent with the purposes or provisions of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. If the minister believes that the legislation is inconsistent, it must be reported to Parliament.

Proposed government legislation is reviewed for charter and other legal risks throughout the policy development and legislative drafting processes. The process of examining government legislation for charter compliance is dynamic and ongoing. Section 4.1 is only one part of a broader process that involves three distinct components: advisory, certification and reporting. The advisory component takes place throughout the policy development process, up to and including the introduction of legislation.

With regard to (nn), the Government of Canada believes that independent, expert, non-partisan oversight of national security agencies is a better model than political intervention in the process. Further, the key powers of the *anti-terrorism act, 2015* would be subject to judicial review and judicial authorization.

Question No. 1096—**Hon. Ralph Goodale:**

With regard to legal costs incurred by the government: what are all costs incurred for legal services, broken down by services provided internally and services contracted out, relating to to (i) Federation of Law Societies of Canada v. Canada (Attorney General), 2013 BCCA 147, (ii) R. v. Anderson, 2013 NLCA, (iii) R. v. Smickle, 2013 ONCA 678, (iv) R. v. Nur, 2013 ONCA 677, (v) R. v. Charles, 2013 ONCA 681, (vi) R. v. Hill, 2012 ONSC 5050, (vii) Canada (Attorney General) v. Whaling, 2014 SCC 20, (viii) Reference re Supreme Court Act, ss. 5 and 6, 2014, (ix) Canada (Attorney General) v. Whaling, 2014 SCC 20, [2014] 1 S.C.R. 392, (x) Smith v. Canada (Attorney General), [2010] 1 FCR 3, 2009 FC 228, (xi) Canada (Justice) v. Khadr, [2008] 2 S.C.R. 125, (xii) Canada (Prime Minister) v. Khadr, 2010 SCC 3, (xiii) Canada (Attorney General) v. PHS Community Services Society, 2011 SCC 44, [2011] 3 S.C.R. 134, (xiv) Canadian Doctors For Refugee Care v. Canada (Attorney general), 2014 FC 651, (xv) Reference re Supreme Court Act, ss. 5 and 6, 2014 SCC 21, [2014] 1 S.C.R. 433?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, to the extent that the information that has been requested is protected by solicitor-client privilege, the federal Crown asserts that privilege and, in the following cases, has waived that privilege only to the extent of revealing the total legal costs.

With regard to (i), the total legal cost is approximately \$332,771.78.

With regard to (ii), the total legal cost is approximately \$1,339.80.

With regard to (iii), the total legal cost is approximately \$207,746.55.

With regard to (iv), the total legal cost is approximately \$333,594.52.

With regard to (v), the total legal cost is approximately \$95,983.84.

With regard to (vi), the Attorney General of Canada was not involved in this case.

With regard to (vii) and (ix), the total legal cost is approximately \$439,667.85.

With regard to (viii) and (xv), the total legal cost is approximately \$347,271.69.

With regard to (x), the total legal cost is approximately \$852,911.28.

With regard to (xi), the total legal cost is approximately \$229,802.61.

With regard to (xii), the total legal cost is approximately \$396,879.03.

With regard to (xiii), the total legal cost is approximately \$426,529.76.

With regard to (xiv), the total legal cost is approximately \$1,062,187.23.

Question No. 1099—**Mr. Mathieu Ravignat:**

With regard to the loan made in 2010 by Canada Economic Development to the Trebio company in Litchfield, Quebec, when it relocated to the industrial park in the Regional County Municipality of Pontiac in the Outaouais region: (a) who approved the loan, including the names and titles of the people who signed the agreement; (b) what were the repayment conditions; (c) what amount has been repaid to date; and (d) how many jobs were created as a result of this loan?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Infrastructure, Communities and Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), the letter of offer for the Trebio start-up project was signed by Mr. Marc Boily, regional director of the Outaouais business office of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec and Mr. Louis Campeau, president of Trebio.

With regard to (b), the financial contribution was repayable.

With regard to (c), in processing parliamentary returns, the government applies the Privacy Act and the principles set out in the Access to Information Act. The amount that has been repaid to date is withheld on the grounds that the information constitutes third party information.

With regard to (d), the agency does not gather data for jobs as a direct result of its funding. However, for some projects, estimates of jobs created and maintained are provided by the project's sponsors and reflect the contributions granted by all donors.

* * *

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if Questions Nos. 1086 to 1092, 1094, 1095, 1097, 1098 and 1100 could be made orders for returns, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Routine Proceedings

[Text]

Question No. 1086—Mr. Adam Vaughan:

With respect to citizenship ceremonies held outside of government facilities since January 1, 2006: (a) where did the ceremonies take place; (b) did a third party, such as a corporation, not-for-profit, or charity, partner with the government for the ceremonies; (c) in the cases where there were partners involved, what were the names of these third parties; (d) were any gifts provided to the new citizens, their families, or others in attendance; and (e) if gifts were provided, what are the details regarding these gifts?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1087—Mr. Adam Vaughan:

With respect to the expiration of federal housing operating agreements: (a) how many agreements expired, broken down by year, since 2014; (b) what are the details of the agreements identified in (a), including (i) name or title of the agreement, (ii) how many units were affected, (iii) what was the date of expiry, (iv) in which municipality, province, territory, Aboriginal community, or other jurisdiction were they located; (c) how many agreements are set to expire by December 31, 2015; and (d) what are the details of the agreements identified in (c), including (i) name or title of the agreement, (ii) how many units will be affected, (iii) in which municipality, province, territory, Aboriginal community, or other jurisdiction are they located?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1088—Hon. Carolyn Bennett:

With regard to the implementation of the government's deficit reduction action plan: (a) what are the total number of federal government positions that have been eliminated pursuant to the plan, broken down by year since 2012; (b) what proportion of the job reductions since 2012 have been within the National Capital Region (NCR) compared with those outside the NCR, broken down by year; (c) excluding positions in the NCR, what are the details of all positions eliminated as part of the deficit reduction action plan since 2012, broken down by (i) province, (ii) year; (d) what percentage of the total federal public service workforce was situated in the NCR at (i) year-end in 2012, (ii) year-end in 2014; (e) what percentage of the total federal public service workforce was located in each province, excluding the NCR positions for Ontario and Quebec, at (i) year-end in 2012, (ii) year-end in 2013, (iii) year-end in 2014; (f) what were the total government expenditures on outside consultants to review corporate services, including human resources, finance and administration, communications, and information technology, broken down by year since 2012; (g) what is the current demographic breakdown, including position level, gender, employment equity group, tenure and average years of service in the public service, for all human resources positions that fall within federal public service occupational group (i) Personnel Administration (PE), (ii) Administrative Services (AS), (iii) Clerical and Regulatory (CR); (h) how many PE positions have been eliminated by the government since 2012, broken down by year; (i) how many PE positions does the government plan to eliminate in 2015-2016; (j) how many PE category employees in the government have been promoted since 2012, broken down by year, and what percentage of employees in that category do those promotions represent; (k) how many PE positions have been downgraded as a result of the implementation of PE Generic Work Descriptions; (l) how many Executive (EX) positions within departmental human resources divisions or branches of the federal public service have been created, eliminated or reclassified to a higher level within the EX category since 2012, broken down by year; (m) when was the classification standard for the PE group last updated; (n) what are the details concerning the most recent PE group classification standard; (o) why was the PE group classification standard not updated prior to implementing PE Generic Work descriptions; (p) what percentage of sick days taken by employees in the public service in 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 were to attend non-routine or ongoing medical appointments as opposed to illness or injury, excluding those related to pregnancy; and (q) what are the details of any documents or memoranda that have been produced since 2010 by any department or agency regarding any current or previous plans to centralize or amalgamate human resources positions within the federal public service under Shared Services Canada or any other shared services agency including, for each document, (i) the date, (ii) the authoring department or agency, (iii) the title of the document?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1089—Mr. Arnold Chan:

With regard to the government's Email Transformation Initiative: (a) how many and which departments have migrated to the one email platform, including the date of the migration; (b) what is the date for the expected migration of the remaining departments, agencies or boards; (c) what was the original date planned for the migration of each government body; (d) how much does the government expect to forgo in savings because of any delays; (e) what are the projected savings arising from the move to one email platform, broken down by (i) department, (ii) total government savings; (f) for departments that have already migrated to the one email platform, (i) what are the recorded Treasury Board transfers for the department to Shared Services Canada, (ii) what are the recorded Treasury Board savings for each department, (iii) what is the amount of reduction to the departments' estimates for 2015-2016; (g) what penalties were charged to Bell Canada and CGI Information Systems for not being able to meet their targets; (h) what is the cost of the contract to both Bell Canada and CGI Information Systems, including (i) how much has currently been paid, (ii) how much is expected to be paid at the completion of the project, (iii) the maximum amount that is allowed under the contract, (iv) the original maximum amount allowed at the signing of the contract; (i) how much has been budgeted for the migration to one email platform; (j) how much was budgeted at the start of the program; (k) what will be the ongoing operational cost to operate the one email platform; (l) what is the static operational cost of operating all email platforms before the migration; (m) for departments that have migrated to the one email platform, what are the issues logged by the IT help desk, including (i) the type of issue, (ii) the length of time on the IT help line, (iii) the cost of any outside contractors hired to address excess volumes; and (n) what are all the contracts associated with the migration and the implantation to the one email platform, including (i) the name of the company, (ii) the amount of the contract, (iii) the amount that has already been paid under the contract, (iv) if the contract is tendered, (v) the length of the contract?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1090—Mr. Arnold Chan:

With regard to PPP Canada: since its creation, (a) what are the date and the details of the agenda of each Board of Directors' meeting; (b) for each meeting, which members of the board attended; (c) which board members declared conflicts of interest during any meeting, specifying the issue on the agenda with respect to which the conflict was declared; (d) what projects have been announced by PPP Canada; (e) which of the projects in (d) had board approval; (f) how much funding was announced for each project; (g) when was the project announced; (h) how much has been paid for the project and to whom; (i) for each project in (d), was a cost-benefit analysis and an analysis of the advantage of using P3 done for the project and, if so, what were the projected savings; (j) where are PPP Canada's unspent funds currently held, including (i) amounts, (ii) terms, (iii) the details of the contracts of all investments; (k) what travel has the board of directors done, including the location and the cost, broken down by (i) travel, (ii) hotel, (iii) per diem, (iv) any other expenses; (l) what were the costs for any announcements made by PPP Canada, including (i) cost of staff travel, (ii) cost of room rentals, (iii) cost of staging equipment or contract, (iv) cost for any writing services paid for by PPP Canada (such as for speeches, press releases, media advisories, backgrounders, and websites), (v) cost of press release distribution, (vi) date of the event, (vii) cost of any food, (viii) any additional costs; and (m) how much has PPP Canada spent on hospitality, including, for each event (i) amount spent, (ii) nature of the event, (iii) date, (iv) authorizing authority, (v) location, (vi) vendor?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1091—Mr. Arnold Chan:

With regard to the government's use and receipt of credit cards since 2005-2006: (a) how much has the government paid in credit-card merchant fees, broken down by (i) year, (ii) company, (iii) amounts withheld, forgone, or otherwise held by either credit card companies or service providers; (b) how many credit cards does the government currently have in use for staff, and which companies provide them; (c) for cards provided by the government to staff, what is the annual fee paid by the government per card; (d) does the government provide any cards to staff that include redeemable rewards and, if so, what are these rewards and who collects them; and (e) how much has the government paid in late or overdue balances, broken down by year?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 1092—Mr. Arnold Chan:**

With regard to the government's non-tax revenue for each year since 2005-2006: (a) how much has each department, agency, board, or other body collected for each year, including (i) the dollar amount and the number of people and businesses that paid the amount, (ii) the programs, fines, services, or product the amount was received for; (b) how much was the public charged for programs, services, products and documents, broken down by year since 2005-2006, including (i) the cost of each product, (ii) the cost of each product where express service or premium service was offered; and (c) how much does it cost the government to provide each program, service, product or document, including (i) the total amount annually for the service as well as the cost per transaction, (ii) the number of transactions per year?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1094—Ms. Niki Ashton:

With respect to the processing of Status Cards and of Secure Certificates of Indian Status by Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, broken down by year from 2004 to 2014, and further broken down by (i) regular application, (ii) application under Bill C-3, Gender Equity in Indian Registration Act, (iii) number of Qalipu band members applying: (a) what is the number of applications; (b) how many are being processed; (c) how many employees are assigned to the processing of applications; (d) what is the amount budgeted for the processing of applications; (e) what is the average wait time for the processing of applications; (f) how many years behind is the processing of applications; and (g) what are the shortest and longest turnaround times on record for the processing of one application?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1095—Mme Niki Ashton:

With regard to the Makwa Sahgaiehan First Nation: (a) how much funding has been allocated for fire safety between 2011 and 2015, broken down by year; (b) what are the details of the budgeting and spending of \$39 999 of funding for fire safety in 2014-2015; (c) how much funding has been allocated for training volunteer or professional firefighters from 2011 to 2015, broken down by year; (d) how much funding has been allocated for building inspections and regulations from 2011 to 2015, broken down by year; and (e) how much funding has been allocated for equipment maintenance and upkeep from 2011 to 2015, broken down by year?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1097—Mr. Paul Dewar:

With regard to Canadian diplomatic operations in Haiti over the past five years: (a) what were the total budgeted government expenditures, broken down by (i) overall total, (ii) year; (b) what were the total actual government expenditures, broken down by (i) overall total, (ii) year; (c) what were the budgeted government expenditures on security, broken down by (i) overall total, (ii) year; (d) what were the actual government expenditures on security, broken down by (i) overall total, (ii) year; (e) how many Canadian diplomatic personnel were employed in Haiti, broken down by year; and (f) for all personnel identified in (e), what were the titles and terms of their positions?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1098—Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims:

With regard to Employment and Social Development Canada and to the unit responsible for reviewing backlogged social security appeals: (a) where is the unit located within the Department's structure; (b) to whom is the unit reporting; (c) how many people are in the unit; (d) how many of the people working in the unit have a medical degree; (e) how many of the people working in the unit are lawyers; (f) how many of the people working in the unit are Canada Pension Plan Disability medical adjudicators; (g) what is the budget of the unit; (h) what are the terms of reference for the unit; (i) what is the unit's expected length of existence; (j) how many appeal case files have been reviewed to date; (k) how many settlements have been offered; (l) how many settlements have been accepted; (m) are settlements retroactive; (n) what are the criteria for deciding to review a file or to allow it to pass on to the Social Security Tribunal; (o) when was the unit created; and (p) when did the unit begin operations?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1100—Mr. Mathieu Ravignat:

With regard to the redevelopment of the industrial park in the Regional County Municipality of Pontiac, specifically the purchase of the former Smurfit-Stone mill in Portage-du-Fort, in the Outaouais region, by Sustainable Site Planning and Management Pontiac, a subsidiary of Green Investment Group Incorporated: (a) were Industry Canada or Canada Economic Development financially involved in this project; (b) if the answer to (a) is affirmative, what proportion of the contributions, in dollar and percentage terms, were (i) refundable, (ii) non-refundable; (c) were the contributions referred to in (b) loans or grants; and (d) what were the names and titles of the official and the entrepreneur who signed this agreement?

(Return tabled)

[English]

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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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 Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

The Speaker: The Chair would like to take a moment to provide some information to the House regarding the management of private members' business.

[Translation]

As members know, after the order of precedence is replenished, the Chair reviews the new items so as to alert the House to bills which at first glance appear to impinge on the financial prerogative of the Crown. This allows members the opportunity to intervene in a timely fashion to present their views about the need for those bills to be accompanied by a royal recommendation.

[English]

Accordingly, following the March 30, 2015 replenishment of the order of precedence of 15 new items, I wish to inform the House that there is one bill that gives the Chair some concerns as to the spending provisions it contemplates.

[Translation]

It is Bill C-544, An Act to amend the Auditor General Act (government advertising), standing in the name of the member for Ottawa South.

[English]

I would encourage hon. members who would like to make arguments regarding the need for a royal recommendation for this bill or any of the other bills now in the order of precedence to do so at an early opportunity.

The Budget

[Translation]

I thank honourable members for their attention.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed from April 21 consideration of the motion that this House approve in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour for me to rise. Our esteemed House leader just made a suggestion as to what I should do with this first response to the budget as the critic of the official opposition and having unlimited time. He suggested I use 14 hours. I do not think we are going to actually spend that much of the House's time on some of the New Democrats' thoughts about the most recent budget. Yet, it is extensive in terms of some of the things we do want to talk about and some of the things that are important to Canadians that are not in the document that was presented, this so-called plan from the government.

First, I have to place myself in the context of the debate and my comments will come as the representative of Skeena—Bulkley Valley, the great northwest of British Columbia. The riding represents about a third of the province of British Columbia. It is the northwest coast, the northwest corner of our country. It is a beautiful place.

As is often noted, it is also a place that has met with some of the most pressing and important questions facing our country. We are a resource-based economy, primarily. With 40% to 45% first nations representation and some of the longest and strongest traditions of first nations people anywhere in the world, we have had to meet with some of the sometimes difficult questions about how to make decisions, not only for today but for future generations.

Before politics, I was in small business. Therefore, not only the place I come from and who I am from my experience inform the way that I and many in my party try to approach every debate, which is from a place of understanding of what Canadians need and hope for from their government.

In a time of economic uncertainty, as the Conservatives have admitted to, one would have hoped that we would have seen yesterday a balanced, fair approach with some measure of ambition. However, when we look through the many pages of the budget and listen to the many words coming from the Minister of Finance, a lack of ambition was clear from the very outset.

The Conservatives talked more about the past and some of their record than they did about the future. In fact, when asked later about his budget, the finance minister, when approaching the concern about how expensive some of his more outrageous decisions were, said that was not for us to have to worry about that we can simply let future generations worry about the problems of paying for his

electoral promises of today. If that is not the very definition of irresponsibility, I do not know what is.

There is short-term thinking in politics, but the Conservatives have taken this to the ridiculous, fully knowing that some of their measures cost a lot today but will be increasingly expensive over years. When that is pointed out to them, Conservatives say, "Well, we're probably not going to be here". They are not worried about it. All they are worried about is what happens over the next number of months and saving their own political bacon.

Controversies, like what is going on in the Senate, the lack of economic performance, the outrageous and irresponsible presenting of so-called anti-terror legislation that is basically just anti-charter legislation have all combined to put a certain amount of political headwinds against the government. Therefore, instead of thinking of the broader interests of Canadians, Conservatives have narrowcast, focus-grouped, and brought their messaging to the point where even budgets, and nothing but budgets, are now a political document, an electoral platform, rather than what the economy actually needs.

Let us take a look at the Conservative record first because that is where the budget falls. That is the context in which these measures will be applied. For the last almost decade now, we have had a Conservative ideology that has thought that tax cuts to the largest and wealthiest corporations, even in the midst of a recession, were the most important thing. The darkest days of the recession saw many Canadian companies struggling to make a profit and by not making a profit they did not pay taxes. The Conservatives thought that banks and oil companies, in particular, needed tens of billions of dollars in breaks.

That Conservative agenda has actually significantly shifted the tax burden in Canada. This is according to Finance Canada's own statistics. Since the Conservative's took power, personal income taxes rose to the treasury by \$15 billion. Fifteen billion dollars more is collected by the Conservatives for personal income taxes, yet \$4.4 billion less has come in from large corporations. That is a clear agenda in choice where Conservatives have said that to pay for roads and hospitals and health care they are happy, in fact enthusiastic, to have taxpayers, Canadians, individuals and families pay more of the burden and lessen the responsibilities of the largest corporations. That is a Conservative tax shift of monumental proportions.

● (1530)

We have also seen, in the last number of years since the Conservatives took over, an economy that went through the global recession, as so many western economies did, but has since yet been able to find its feet again. The Governor of the Bank of Canada, when asked about job growth under these Conservatives, said that job growth in Canada was atrocious.

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For those who are not familiar with banker language, especially governors of the various banks, they do not tend to use strong language. They use very calm, quiet, coded words to transit their intentions because every word they utter can be parsed and have big impacts on the market.

When a governor of a bank comes in and says that the job performance of this economy, of the government, is atrocious, one should pay attention. He is right. The job growth in Canada right now is estimated at zero. I do not know if that is a concern or even getting through to some of my Conservative colleagues, but the job growth rate in Canada right now is 0%.

I do not know why Conservatives would think that 2014 was what they called a recovery year, a good year. The Canadian population grew at almost twice the rate as job growth did. Let us pause for a moment. This was a good year. This was before oil started to fall from its height of \$100 or more per barrel to where it is settling now, around \$50 or \$55. This was supposed to be a good year.

The Conservatives can spin, but the notion of spin in politics requires at least a kernel of truth somewhere which all the fancy words and big ad campaigns are wrapped around. However, when there is no kernel of truth, spin is turned into what we call, what it is, a lie, not truth. Canadians can tell the difference when someone is trying to make something appear much better than it is and when someone is telling the simple opposite of facts.

Let us get back to the facts. Since the government took office in Canada we have lost more than 400,000 manufacturing jobs. At one point the industry minister, who one could say is responsible for manufacturing, rose in his place in this House and disputed what the NDP was saying about manufacturing. He said that the NDP was making it up because he had read it in a magazine. I guess that is where he got his information. A day later he had to recant, realizing that he was in fact wrong.

Aside from that, who pays the penalty? The real price is paid by Canadian families who can no longer afford the mortgage, rent or putting food on the table because they have lost their jobs at saw mills, auto plants or aerospace across this country.

Over these numbers of years, we have also seen the Conservatives add almost \$160 billion of debt to the national debt in Canada. The Conservatives, who say how great they are at managing, have added almost \$160 billion on the debt. If we break that down, for every man, woman and child, that is approximately \$4,000 for every single living soul in this country. It is a debt that the Conservatives have placed on their backs.

We could ask, "For what?" If the Conservatives are going to borrow that much money, almost \$4,000 per person, we should see some results. However, we have an economy that has flatlined, anemic growth. We have 130,000 fewer jobs for young Canadians today than before the recession. That is 130,000 fewer opportunities for young people to get into the workforce. We have 300,000 fewer jobs across the economy than we did before the recession began.

The Conservatives talk about some sort of mythical recovery and how wonderful things are, but again, spin only works if there is a kernel truth in it. How can we have lost 400,000 manufacturing jobs and be creating no jobs right now while the Conservatives are

somehow congratulating themselves and pulling a muscle patting themselves on the back so often. Conservatives are so completely out of touch with the realities facing Canadians, the people out in the real world, the people we allegedly work for and that the Conservatives are meant to work for.

We proposed a very sound and reasonable solution to some of the challenges we faced, particularly when it comes to child poverty. It has been almost 20 years since the House of Commons committed to eliminating child poverty in Canada.

• (1535)

We came forward with a solution weeks ago to close a loophole entirely designed for the wealthiest Canadians imaginable: those who receive their pay in stock options. I do not know what kind of jobs members in the House had, but my family and friends have not had the experience of being paid in stock options. Maybe that is a common experience among the Conservatives because they maintained a loophole that was opened up first by the Liberals and it is not cheap by the way.

This loophole costs the treasury about \$720 million a year. What it does, it says to CEOs and folks in the corner offices that when they are paid in stock dividends, they will be taxed at a lower rate than if they were paid the way most working-class, middle-class Canadians get paid, which is in salary. However, the government would tax them less, almost three-quarters of a billion dollars less, which is a grand and massive gift to those who already have so much.

We said that we should close this loophole. These folks do not need another Porsche or Maserati going out the door. Let us close this loophole and actually help those who are most disadvantaged, those children and families who are having trouble putting food on the table and going to school hungry. However, the Conservatives, in their budget, refused that opportunity.

We see 1.3 million Canadians today out of work. Actually, we had a moment here in question period today when we asked the minister to take action to help save some jobs on the east coast. She replied that those people are going to be so happy because of a tax cut that the Conservatives put in, which misses the concept that when people lose their job, a tax cut does not do much because they are not paying taxes.

Under the Conservatives, only 30% or 35% of working people who pay into employment insurance are eligible for employment insurance. Previously, under the Liberals, somewhere around \$54 billion was stolen out of the EI fund to pay for all manner of things that the Liberals wanted to do. When the Conservatives came in, they said it was a new day and they were going to change that.

The Budget

However, one of the cynical tricks the Conservatives did was change the qualification rules. They made the rules tighter and harder for Canadians who work seasonal or temporary jobs, such as in the tourism and agriculture sectors. The Conservatives lump them out of the employment insurance program, but are still happy enough to collect the EI remittances from their paycheques. They get to pay in but never actually get to use the insurance. That sounds like some awful insurance scheme or scam in which they can only pay in but never receive any of the insurance benefits.

That sounds like Veterans Affairs. For those in the military, there is a certain amount of support for soldiers who are struggling and have been injured. They come back from Afghanistan, Iraq and other incredibly dangerous places, and the Conservatives thump themselves on the chest and say, "Stand up for our troops, we do". The Conservatives are always happy with the photo ops. Yet, when the troops come home and when we need to actually stand up for them in a sincere and honest way, we have seen the Conservatives actually claw back \$1 billion from our veterans, meanwhile denying them the access to the care and coverage that they are entitled to, that they so bravely fought for.

They do not ask for much, but we have seen the treatment of our vets by this government. There is no other word for it but "shameful". It is shameful that a hero today, when they have the uniform on, is forgotten tomorrow under the current Prime Minister.

I have sat with families in my constituency who are asking for some basic treatment of fairness. One family came to me just weeks ago. Their son had killed himself not that long ago after returning from several tours in Afghanistan. His family asked for some help from Veterans Affairs for the funeral. They asked for some help to bring in some of his company who had served with him in Afghanistan. In both cases, the Conservative government decided to claw back money out of Veterans Affairs rather than support this member.

This man had sought help for the PTSD that he was suffering under. He had sought help multiple times from the current Conservative government and had been turned down. At the funeral, several of his friends who had flown up on their own dime spoke to us about how this man had saved their lives, and not just in the field of combat but since they had returned because they had similar suicidal thoughts.

● (1540)

What does it say about a country when we treat our veterans this way and when we simply refuse to acknowledge the price and sacrifice they have made and take such glory, as the Conservatives do, in launching yet another war and saying that this is about the identity of this country and that we will stand up for this and stand up for that? Yet when the bill is to be paid to our brave men and women, Conservatives would rather have their balanced budget on the backs of those veterans than actually do them the service and the justice they are entitled to.

There are other choices made in the budget that are most disconcerting. The Prime Minister himself made a sacred promise to first nations. There is a significant gap in the funding for the education of young kids in this country. There is about a 30% to 32% gap between what first nations kids receive on reserves and what

everyone else gets when it comes to education. It is a significant gap, as much as \$2.3 billion. The Prime Minister said to start a new relationship, because we all know that he has had his problems with basically understanding first nations' realities. He made a commitment of \$1.9 billion to start to close that gap so that first nations kids would have the opportunities that all of our children do. Where was that promise in the budget? Conservatives found their way to \$40 million. From \$1.9 billion to \$40 million is what they said.

It is maintaining the status quo, maintaining the gap, maintaining under Conservatives another generation of first nations kids who do not have the same opportunities as the rest of us. The Conservatives' answer to that is to blame first nations, much as the minister did over missing and murdered aboriginal women. Who did he cite as the main culprit for this? It was not the lack of transportation and support for first nations communities or the lack of jobs in first nations communities. He blamed first nations men. He said it is primarily their responsibility; it is their fault.

When a minister of the crown stands in front of a group of first nations leaders, or stands in front of anyone, and has the audacity to blame some of the very same victims of this crisis, then when we look for support for a national inquiry to find the root causes, not the ones the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs claimed in his blatantly, I want to say derogatory or insulting terms, it angers me. When I hear a minister of the crown perpetuate racist stereotypes, it angers me as a Canadian. When we ask for a national inquiry, the government says, as the Prime Minister said, it is not on their radar.

Conservatives were able to launch a national inquiry called the Cohen Commission when some salmon did not come up the Skeena River, which I think was \$30-odd million, because we had a bad salmon run and needed to get to the bottom of what was going on with those fish. That was important, because those fish are important to our economy and our way of life. The Conservatives can find money for missing fish but cannot find money for missing and murdered aboriginal women. Where are the government's priorities?

Let us see where the Conservatives' priorities are at in the context of an economy that has flatlined, anemic job growth, young people having an unemployment rate twice the national average, and a government that put all of its economic eggs in one basket. Was \$150 oil not going to stay forever? That was the plan. They were going to build pipelines all over the place, east, west, north, and south. They were going to bulldoze them through. They were going to scrap environmental laws and gut the environmental assessment process. Lo and behold, oil goes up and oil goes down. Imagine. It is kind of like the Conservatives.

The Budget

It is like the goldfish in the goldfish bowl that swims around and sees a castle and says “Ah, there is a castle in here”. It does another turn, and it has such bad a memory that the goldfish says, “There is a castle in here”. It just does it over and over again. The Conservatives put all their eggs in one basket, and then the commodity prices fall, and they say, “Holy cow, I cannot believe commodity prices have fallen. What a shock. It is time to panic and dip into the rainy day fund, because this is a national disaster”. That is what that fund was allegedly for.

Well, \$50 a barrel for oil is the 40-year average. I do not know if \$50 a barrel is a national crisis for Conservatives, because they placed the whole economy on one peg in their own planning, but it is the reality today. We actually had to delay the budget a couple of months for this shock, this impossible-to-comprehend shock, that oil went down in price. A lot of provinces were able to figure it out and actually deliver budgets, although Alberta did, and I do not know if that is working out so well for its current premier.

● (1545)

Let us look at the other priorities in this budget. The single largest item in this budget, in terms of agendas, is \$2.5 billion for income splitting. I did not hear a lot about income splitting from the finance minister yesterday. He has done a lot of interviews with the media, and he never mentioned it in his number one, two, three, or four favourite items in his own budget. However, one would think he would want to take a little more credit for \$2.5 billion, and it makes one wonder why.

From the C.D. Howe Institute to the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, which I think covers the spectrum fairly well in terms of economic thinking in the country, they have all said that this \$2.5 billion for income splitting has to be panned because it ultimately goes to only 15% of Canadian families, and 85% of Canadian families get nothing. That 15% skews toward the wealthier groups in this country.

If the Conservatives think that it was those people who needed the most help, then they brought in a budget that met that thinking, because they are not only blowing \$2.5 billion on income splitting, they are also going to add a higher ceiling to the tax free savings account, the TFSA. Many millions have one of these accounts, but only 11% have actually maxed out their contributions right now at \$5,500. The Conservatives said, “If only 11% maxed out, let us almost double it to \$10,000”.

I do not know about anyone else, but when I think of working-class, middle-class Canadians, some of those at the lower end of the economic scale, most of them do not face the predicament that at the end of the year they have \$10,000 extra sitting in their pockets that they simply do not know what to do with. “We’ve paid our rent, we’ve paid the mortgage, we got the kids braces, we have everything we need. Honey, what do we do with this extra \$10,000 I found? Oh, I know, the Conservatives have a solution for me”. That is where their priorities go.

Maybe all of their friends face this challenge every year of having too much money lying around, not attributed to the cost of living, but the people I work for do not actually face this problem each and every year. However, the Conservatives have decided that they are going to fork some cash into this. The amazing thing about this

particular scheme is that the price of it starts at just a few hundred million, for wealthier Canadians, but when we start to walk it out over time, it becomes a gorilla. This thing will cost the treasury somewhere in the order of \$20 billion a year. It will cost \$20 billion a year, for folks who are in the upper scale, the wealthier Canadians.

When the finance minister was asked if this was responsible, prudent, and conservative, he said it was not their problem. I do not get this phrasing and why he chose it, but regardless, he said that it is for the Prime Minister’s “granddaughter to solve”. It is not for him. It is for his grandkids to worry about. Therefore, why are they asking him questions about it? It is not his problem. They are just going to kick this one down the road and let them figure out how to pay for it. If it works over the next five months, says the finance minister, then so be it, because that is his time frame.

My goodness, this type of crass political calculation that will cost future generations so much is reminiscent of one other Conservative policy. It is not just fiscal, it is environmental. The former environment minister will know this. We have seen the Conservatives act like *The Monkey Wrench Gang* when it comes to environmental commitments on the international stage, which is the only way we are going to deal with climate change. We have to act both locally and internationally.

We have seen other countries take these steps. The Danes, the Finns, the Germans, the Brits, the Americans and the Chinese are all making pledges, commitments and promises. More important than that, we have seen it from the private sector. Globally last year investments in clean energy technology and energy production outpaced those of all carbon investments combined.

In fact, in Canada, despite antagonistic policies from the government, never mind not being helpful, as the Conservatives find a way to try to thwart anyone trying to do the right thing, we have seen the cost of solar go down by 83% since 2008. We have seen wind, solar, run-of-river and biomass energy production almost double since 2009. This is despite a Conservative government.

● (1550)

Imagine what we would do with a New Democratic government when it comes to clean energy. Imagine the opportunities we would have for young Canadians who are looking to work in the clean energy sector in jobs that are higher-value jobs, jobs that are often closer to home. They are jobs like retrofitting our homes so that the energy bill for Canadians will be lower because they will consume less energy. The negawatts people talk about are the best types of investments we can make.

The Budget

The Conservatives actually had a home retrofit program. Do members remember this? I remember it. They created a home retrofit program, and it helped out small businesses. It helped to lower costs for Canadians. That is not bad. It created a whole bunch of new jobs and lowered our impact on the planet. That great idea became oversubscribed. It was so popular and worked so well that the Conservatives blew their first budget, so they did the natural Conservative thing when something is working well; they cancelled it.

The small businesses, the carpenters and folks who work in retrofitting and solar panels, and all of these companies that were starting to thrive and get their foothold had a backlash against the Conservatives, so the Conservatives brought it back. What happened? It was oversubscribed again. It worked too well, and what did the Conservatives do? They cancelled it again, because when something works that well, it is just so hard to imagine that having a clean energy economy in Canada would be good for Canada and that having a diverse economy might be a good idea.

Ask our friends in Alberta right now. Some of them are finding this new religion and saying that we should diversify. This is a really good idea. We should diversify, because the price of one of our major commodities just fell through the floor. Yet we look for the diversification efforts of the Conservative government, and we see the continuance of a \$1-billion subsidy to the oil sands sitting in the budget. We see \$1 billion more for Exxon and Shell. It is not just the corporate tax cuts they got, the billions there. This is another \$1 billion. When we look around for clean energy, green energy, and clean tech, what do we find? We find nothing.

I have to give the Conservatives some credit here, because after almost 10 years of trying this across the board with no strings attached, with big, wealthy corporation tax cuts and an anemic job growth performance, with the results we see today, the Conservatives actually borrowed, stole, or at least endorsed the NDP plan that had been presented by the leader of the New Democrats in the House for a vote just a couple of months ago. What the leader of the NDP said was that small businesses create eight out of 10 new jobs in Canada, so let us drop their rate by almost 20%, from 11% to 9%. In manufacturing, we have lost 400,000 manufacturing jobs in this country since the Conservatives took over, so let us help the manufacturing sector. We need to innovate. Canada needs to be a better country when it comes to research and development and innovation.

We presented it to the House of Commons for a vote. The Conservatives voted against it and said that it was madness. What we suggested, they said, was economic madness. The Liberals voted against it because they said that lowering the small business tax rate is a tax dodge, a tax loophole, because a right-wing economist suggested such a thing. They voted against it for that reason.

We saw the Liberal leader out yesterday. When asked why he is voting against the budget, he said that it is because the budget lowers the tax rate on small businesses. We all know that according to the Liberal leader and his brain trust there that small businesses are tax evaders and tax cheats, so if we lower their tax rate, a bunch of rich guys are going to get away with something. Never mind that when the Liberals were in power, they handed out tens of billions of dollars of corporate giveaways with no strings attached. They

created \$650 million of dead money, according to the Bank of Canada and the finance department. Dead money is money that is given away and is not reinvested. They do not reinvest in a plant or hire more people. They just sit on it or give dividends to the shareholders, wherever they happen to live. The Liberal leader's first concern was that a cut to the small business rate was a tax loophole.

We presented those three ideas for manufacturing, helping out small businesses, and an innovation fund to the House of Commons for a vote and debate. The Conservatives called it economic madness because it had the colour orange attached to it. Now they have painted it blue and put it in the budget, but not quite. Mimicry never shows up properly the same way. The original is always a little bit better.

● (1555)

We were more aggressive on our small business tax cuts. We were more ambitious on our manufacturing help. We were more expansive on innovation. However, let us give them credit for this at least: the Conservatives have realized that their economic policy is a failure because the facts are in front of them. When we have been calling for manufacturing help, help for small businesses and all the rest for these long years and the Conservatives have dismissed it, I will take some of yesterday as a little endorsement, because imitation is the best form of flattery. If they are imitating our policies, although they did not get them quite right, at least they put something in there. We will fix them.

Where else did they miss on their priorities? They did not bring back the retirement age from 67 to 65. That is a direct hit to every senior in this country. That is two years for which they cannot receive the pension they paid into. It works out on average to about \$28,000 for every senior per year, gone, cut by those guys. They come back and say, "Don't worry about it. We're going to let you contribute more because you have so much money when you are working". For seniors facing that reality right now, far too many live in poverty in this country, and we plan to lift them out of that poverty.

The Conservatives could have helped by allowing more contributions to the Canada pension plan. Every private sector economist has said that this is one of the most stable and secure pension plans in the world and the investment and contribution toward that is a sound and fiscally prudent thing to do. They missed that.

We have talked about climate change. We have talked about their deplorable record on first nations. The Conservatives have gutted the coastal protection that we have in this country, on all coasts, with the Coast Guard, DFO, the ability to respond to accidents when they happen, and we know they happen because humans are involved. Yet, they did not replace that.

The Budget

In fact, amazingly in this budget, the Conservatives are going to export the spill response model used in British Columbia to other coasts in Canada, because we saw with the spill last week in Vancouver harbour that a twelve and a half hour response to an oil spill beside one of our largest cities is not only acceptable, it is exceptional, according to the transport minister. Twelve and a half hours to get booms out 400 metres near a population of 3.5 million is great. Yet, when we look at what the Conservatives are going to do about coastal protection, they say they are going to take that awful performance and spread it around like a virus.

We have to take a close look at their balanced books and their balanced legislation, because this is important. The Conservatives are going to try to ride this pony on into the next election. It is important to ask how we got there and what choices were made.

My friend from Parkdale—High Park I think had the best analysis of this. It is like the Conservatives pulled out all the change from in between the cushions of the couch and they threw it in, and then they sold the couch because they have to get to this political agenda, which is what this has become. They have clawed back from Veterans Affairs. They have clawed back money from every type of service and protection we have keeping Canadians safe, such as railway safety, food inspection, environmental protection, all the basic stuff that Canadians look to their governments to do. The Conservatives cut all those programs and did not repair them.

They also had to dip into the contingency fund. This is the prudent approach; we set aside \$3 billion because every once in a while there is a natural disaster that we cannot predict. The floods in Calgary come to mind. No one could have predicted that. Wait; climate scientists predict those kinds of things, but generally speaking, we do not know when and where these types of things are going to happen and we need to have a bit of a rainy-day fund set up.

The Conservatives have slashed that rainy-day fund by 66% and said that they need it now. The crisis right now is a political crisis. It is not a natural disaster, unless we call the Conservative Party such a thing, and we may, but it is a political crisis. They need to save their bacon and they need to balance the books, so they are going to take \$2 billion out of there. They delayed the budget in order to book the sales of GM shares, until those sales came to maturity in April. They are going to bank those billion dollars, as well as rip off and change the employment insurance fund. All of this is what they did in order to achieve this, because in the fall, when they introduced their \$2.5 billion income-splitting scheme, they thought they had a surplus of about \$7 billion or \$8 billion and they spent it. They spent \$4.5 billion on these measures and a bunch of others. They spent the surplus before they had it. Then they panicked. They delayed the budget. They did not know what to do because the economy was not performing the way they had hoped. One would think that planning more than praying would be the edict within the finance department, but not under the Conservatives.

We have seen this legislation to balance the books, that outside of extraordinary years, recessionary years, the Conservatives are going to say that the ministers of the crown should take a pay cut. Wow, that is a pretty heavy stick there.

● (1600)

Wait. What have the last five years been? They have not been recession years, have they? No, they have not. In fact, Canada has not been in a recession for the last five years. The Conservatives thought this balanced budget legislation was a good idea for the next government, not for them. We call this hypocrisy because that is what it is. If the Conservatives believed in this, and they said they did because they promised this bill in the last election, one would wonder what they were doing since. They did not have balanced books. They had massive debt.

We have actually been able to add up what each minister owes. We sent them a letter last week to help them do the math of all of their pay packet they need to send back to Canadians. Certainly, if a principle for the Conservatives is that balanced books are so important that it should cost the cabinet if they do not do it, then it should cost the cabinet if they did not do it, and they did not do it. However, it is what it is. It is a stunt. It is something to throw a little at the base who worry that the Conservative Party of Canada added almost \$160 billion to the national debt. I did not know they ran on that the last time in 2011. Coming out of the recession, they said they would nail this debt, crank it up so much that it would cost about \$4,000 for every living soul in this country to pay back.

Of course it is more than \$4,000 to borrow this kind of money. For people who have ever borrowed money for a car or who have ever had a student loan, what they borrowed was not what they paid back. When the Conservatives ratcheted on this debt, we hoped they would have left us a strong economy, but they were not able to do that.

We look through this budget and we see where the priorities lie for the Conservatives. Single moms are not on the Conservatives' radar. The 1.3 million Canadians out of work are not in their target group that they so often talk about. They are not part of the Conservatives' universe. Folks making the same income who have kids are still not going to get any help from income splitting. The Conservatives simply do not care.

I have a quote which I think is an important one. Paulette Senior, the CEO of the YWCA of Canada said:

This budget fails to balance the lives of women in Canada. Women continue to provide the majority of child care, despite comprising half the workforce and being the majority of university graduates. That trifecta is the 21st century reality for families, and affordable child care is the winning ticket. We are sorry to see the federal government's continued disinterest in leading on this issue.

The Budget

One wonders when one looks at the fundamentals. As the TD Bank senior economist said, there is a lot of things booked in here that are not based on economic fundamentals. No kidding. I would not necessarily call it the healthiest balance. Is it on the strength of the economy and the strength of the revenues? No, it is not. It is a little bit of pixie dust, as one columnist said, and they sprinkle it around liberally and suddenly they get to a Conservative budget.

New Democrats believe that we need to put forward solutions. We do not need to just oppose, but we need to propose. We have proposed \$15 child care. We have proposed a \$15 federal minimum wage. We have proposed help for small businesses and manufacturing so we could add value to the natural resources, rather than follow the Conservative ideology which is to ship everything out raw and let some other country add value while we pick up the tab. We have proposed solutions time and time again, and we will continue to do so. In the meantime, this is the agenda put forward by the current government. It is an agenda that is not acceptable to the Canadian people because it does not fit the interests of those looking for child care, those looking for a job, those looking for a job that maybe puts them above the poverty line.

There is a lack of ambition in this budget. There is a missed opportunity. The gap that has been growing steadily over previous governments continues to grow. It is not simply an income gap, but it is an opportunity gap, the opportunity to do what we must all do as legislators, which is to look to the future and hopefully leave the next generation something better than what we found.

We see, through the Minister of Finance's crass comments that reveal perhaps too much of the Conservatives' thinking, that any of the big-ticket promises they have made, any of the big bills that are going to have to be paid for Conservative largesse, opportunism and crass politics they will leave for future generations, say Conservatives. It is not a concern to them.

Their only concern happens in October when Canadians will go to the polls. That is a concern also for Canadians. They are going to have a clear choice between more tax giveaways for the wealthiest few, and the New Democratic Party which believes that all ships should be lifted. We should not leave children behind, whether they are first nations or non-first nations, whether they are born wealthy or middle class or poor.

• (1605)

We believe Canada is a place of opportunity. We cannot squander the efforts of our previous generations by dumping on future generations.

It is enough to say what I have said, but there is an important piece that I would add.

I move:

That the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word "That" and substituting the following:

"this House not approve the budgetary policy of the government as it:

- a) Gives billions of dollars in handouts to the wealthy few through income splitting, doubling Tax-Free Savings Accounts, and tax loopholes for CEOs;
- b) Fails to help middle class families by creating affordable, quality childcare spaces;
- c) Contains no plan to make life more affordable by tackling unfair ATM fees or high credit card rates;

d) Fails to restore the age of retirement to 65 by reversing cuts to Old Age Security;

e) Does nothing to help workers by reinstating the federal minimum wage and raising it to \$15 an hour;

f) Fails to fight climate change or grow the economy while protecting the environment; and

g) Relies on one-time asset sales and accounting sleight-of-hand to achieve a balance.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The amendment is in order.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Thornhill.

• (1610)

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to hear the suggestion from my hon. colleague in the official opposition indicating that he will be supporting our legislation for balanced budgets.

I was also delighted to hear the member fondly remember the home retrofit program that our government so successfully introduced and executed. It was certainly an oversubscribed program. Our government discovered that, in fact, Canadians' intentions had been jump-started by the program, and that they were overwhelmingly, program or not, going to invest in the retrofitting of their homes in the same ways the original program had supported.

My friend seems to have overlooked one of the chapters and provisions in economic action plan 2015, and that is the home accessibility tax credit for seniors and persons with disabilities. It proposes a new permanent home accessibility tax credit, a 15% non-refundable income tax credit applying to up to \$10,000 of eligible home renovation expenditures per year, providing \$1,500 in tax relief, and which would be associated with the purchase and installation, for example, of wheelchair ramps, walk-in bathtubs, and wheel-in showers. It is a good benefit for the disabled and for seniors, but also for the small businesses and contractors—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order. I would ask that members keep their questions and answers brief.

The hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

The Budget

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, a lot of budgets are about choices and proportion. How much are those guys going to focus on giving out to the wealthier Canadians? Well, \$2.5 billion, plus a bunch in TFSA's and all the rest that the Conservatives have done. How much are they going to help average Canadians? If my friend is talking about home accessibility, which is a very important issue, one would connect that to a principle of health care. However, what is missing in the budget is the \$36 billion health care cut that the Conservatives made to provincial health care budgets. All of those home visits and all the things that are needed to support seniors who want to stay in their homes longer, which New Democrats believe in, need to be supported by a vibrant, public health care system.

To cut \$36 billion from the health care fund to the provinces that administer health care, then offer up a tax incentive for home retrofit for Canadians to have accessibility and say that everyone should be happy, is like the Minister of Transport saying that the government will offer a tax cut to people who lost their jobs. The Conservatives are missing the point.

The point is to have a good, robust health care system for Canadians. Throwing down a few small programs and then expecting people to be satisfied when they do not have the health care attendant, the nurses, doctors and health care they need misses the entire point of what health care is.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at a time when Canadians are looking for strong leadership from the Prime Minister's Office, once again we have seen a huge letdown.

We want economic growth. We want to see a middle class that is given attention, as opposed to the neglect that we have seen over the last number of years. The best example of that is in regard to the income splitting. The government is giving hundreds of millions of dollars every year to some of Canada's wealthiest, and at a substantial cost. Who is going to be paying for it? It is going to be Canada's middle class. We wanted and expected a budget that would provide economic activity and have a sense of fairness to it.

Does the finance critic believe in any way that this budget delivers any sense of fairness to Canadians?

• (1615)

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, no it does not.

What is remarkable about something like income splitting, as an example, is that only 15% receive the benefit, and that is skewed toward wealthy Canadians, but 100% of Canadians pay for it. Therefore, we have this strange reverse Robin Hood scene going on with the Conservatives where they take from the middle class and the poor to ensure that some wealthy folks, who, Lord knows, could always use a little more according to the Conservatives, get a little more.

The Conservatives not only have missed an opportunity around questions of fairness, but they have missed the reality of what Canadians want right now, which is affordable child care. I would encourage my friend from the Liberal Party to develop a program, as we have, because we have found this issue resonating with Canadians across the country. The extra \$60 a month does not mean much to parents who pay \$1,600 a month in child care costs. What they want is affordability.

Women are participating in our economy right now at the lowest rate since 2002. Every economist will tell us that on affordable child care, for every \$1 that is put in, the economy gets back \$2 to \$3. This is a true investment. What does income splitting, at \$2.5 billion a year, do for the Canadian economy? Nothing.

Yesterday was a good day for those who are wealthy, but not such a good day for everybody else.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Skeena—Bulkley Valley for his amendment, which I am pleased to second on behalf of the people of Beauport—Limoilou.

If I may, I would like to say a quick word about tax avoidance, and the member for Papineau and his gang could accuse my barber of that. I am sure that when I go and have my hair cut, my barber will have some very interesting feedback regarding that accusation from the Liberals.

That said, to come back to our amendment, now the Conservatives are refusing to talk about income splitting. That is very interesting. I wanted to ask my colleague from Skeena—Bulkley Valley what he thinks of the fact that the term “income splitting” was nowhere to be found in the Minister of Finance's speech yesterday.

For the past several weeks, however, Conservative backbenchers have been practically bellowing, wanting to talk about the promises they made to their voters to bring in income splitting. Now it looks somewhat like a pill that is leaving a bad taste in the Conservatives' mouths.

What are my colleague's thoughts on that?

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, it is not just what they have said; it is what they have not said. Yesterday, it was very interesting to see that the biggest program in this budget, income splitting, does not really exist for the Minister of Finance. That is unbelievable; this is a new reality.

After months and months of criticism from all over the country and from discussions across Canada, \$2.5 billion just does not exist for the Minister of Finance or for the Prime Minister. Obviously that is because the program is not very popular, it will cost a lot, and it is not fair.

We, the New Democrats, believe that all of our discussions should be based on fairness. Fairness will be central to our budget when we become the Government of Canada.

[*English*]

Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the riding I represent, Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, very few citizens have the opportunity to reach institutional daycare as the member says. It is a broad riding with rural, suburbs, as well as urban. We have a plan for every family to have an opportunity to get some benefits to pay for whatever child care they have.

The Budget

What would the member say to the one constituent of mine who has already communicated with me. He has four young children with a stay-at-home mom. He goes to work and has a very modest salary. He said that this would make a serious difference in his household income because it would mean thousands of dollars in these tax breaks?

What does the member say about Canadians with low or modest incomes benefiting in that regard?

• (1620)

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, it was quite revealing in the preamble to the member's question that a number of his constituents could not gain access to affordable child care. That is point. The member's leader, the Prime Minister, promised to create child care spaces in 2008, in 2011. He made the promise over and over again as did previous Liberal governments. Without a plan, it did not happen. The Conservatives did not plan to do it and they did not create the child care spaces.

I live in a rural community and there is a lack of child care spaces, especially affordable, quality ones. Canadians are looking for that. I am stunned that the Conservatives do not seem to get this basic reality for Canadians, that when they pay \$1,000 or \$1,600 a month per child, it is incredibly expensive. Many Canadians are paying more for child care than they are for their mortgage.

We presented a fully costed, affordable, quality child care program. The member calls it institutionalization. Does he refer to public schools this way, that our kids are being institutionalized? When someone goes to public medicine, does he refer to it that way? I hope not. The language is offensive. We need to help out moms, dads, moms and moms, and dads and dads, and also look for a little help for single parents who are trying to make ends meet.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking, Rail Transportation; the hon. member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, Employment; the hon. member for Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, Rail Transportation.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Papineau.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to have this opportunity to speak the day after the Conservative government tabled its 10th budget. This is a budget that gives the most to Canadians who need it the least. I am not saying that this is not an important document—quite the contrary.

[*English*]

Soon we will have an election. When the time comes for us to campaign, the Prime Minister and his candidates will cite this latest budget when they try to convince voters to keep them in power. Therefore, it is important that Canadians know what this is, what is in it and what is not.

It is not, for instance, a plan for jobs and growth for the middle class and those looking to join it. The budget is a political document

produced to that end. It is a vision for a Conservative election campaign; it is not a vision for Canada.

[*Translation*]

A long time ago, before Canada officially became a country, another campaign was under way, and when Louis-Hippolyte La Fontaine talked to his constituents in Terrebonne, he said:

Canada is the land of our ancestors; it is our country as it must be the adopted country of the various populations which come from diverse portions of the globe, to make their way into its vast forests as the future resting place of their families and their hopes. Like us, their paramount desire must be the happiness and prosperity of Canada, as the heritage which they should endeavour to transmit to their descendants in this young and hospitable country. Above all their children must be like ourselves, CANADIANS.

Former governor general of Canada Adrienne Clarkson said: “In that small paragraph are enunciated all the principles by which we as Canadians live in an immigrant society”. I agree, but that is not all.

This paragraph expresses a fundamental idea that Canadians are committed to and have respected for generations: the idea that their children and grandchildren will have an equal chance and a better life than they had.

That is how it was in Canada for a long time. Over the past century, our economy grew, and so did our middle class, becoming the foundation of a prosperous economic future. When the middle class grows and succeeds, so too does the entire country. Nonetheless, something changed in the past decade.

• (1625)

[*English*]

When the Prime Minister first took over in 2006, he inherited a \$13 billion surplus. It was at the time of perhaps the strongest fiscal situation in the world. It took him only three years to put Canada back into deficit, and that was ahead of the recession. Since then, nearly 10 years of Conservative fiscal mismanagement have left 139 other countries ahead of Canada for expected growth in 2015, and that was before oil prices took a slide. That was before this delayed budget.

However, Canadians do not have to hear about international finances to know how poorly things are going. Over the past 30 years, median after-tax family incomes in Canada, those of the middle class, have only increased by 15%. Still, Canadians keep working hard, making contributions to our country and its future. Yet what happens when those hard-working Canadians are ready to settle into retirement? Many will not. They will have to keep working just to survive.

The Budget

Studies now show that a full third of Canadians nearing retirement age have not been able to save for it at all. It used to be that the government would help. Now that is less the case. By pushing up the age to qualify for old age security and the guaranteed income supplement, the Prime Minister has made it even harder for Canadians to get the retirement they deserve. He did this so his government could double the tax-free savings limit. Again, that doubling only favours the richest Canadians. That is unfair. Canada deserves a better plan, focused on strengthening the middle class.

[*Translation*]

The Prime Minister could have implemented a plan for growth; he did not. When we study this budget, we see that he still does not want to. This government has done nothing to promote growth in the last decade and therefore our middle class, the backbone of the economy, has begun to weaken.

Less than half of Canadians consider themselves to be part of the middle class, compared to 67% in 2002. No less than 57% of Canadians believe that the next generation will be worse off.

How can a nation such as ours, which is rich in so many ways, have come to this, and why are so many Canadians having trouble making ends meet every day?

[*English*]

It is because the government has neglected that other key component of Canada's character that LaFontaine hinted at 170 years ago, fairness.

Here is the thing about fairness. It does not mean everyone is equal, but it does mean that everyone is given an equal chance. Canada is about that. No matter who people are or where they are from, they deserve a fair shot. That is how we succeed together. That is how our economy grows.

As we have seen with this new budget, the Conservatives still have no plan for growth. Here is what their plan is instead.

The Prime Minister and his Conservative government want to spend \$2 billion on a tax break for the richest Canadians. In order to pay for it, they sold a bunch of assets and cut back on things like critical infrastructure investments, support for the RCMP and our security services, and health care funding for our veterans. All of this so they can give fewer than 15% of Canadians a tax break and have the other 85% pick up the tab. That will not help our economy grow and it will not help our middle class grow.

• (1630)

[*Translation*]

It is not fair. The Prime Minister and his government like to talk about the number of jobs created since the recession. However, the reality is that hundreds of thousands of Canadians are still unemployed or underemployed. There are some 200,000 more unemployed people than there were before the recession.

In fact, the rate of job growth was less than 1% for 15 consecutive months. This is the longest period with growth below this threshold in almost 40 years, excluding recessionary periods.

The statistics on youth are even more grim. There are now more than 165,000 fewer jobs for young Canadians than there were before the recession.

[*English*]

What does a plan for growth actually look like? It could start with infrastructure investments. The Conservatives will tell Canadians that they have poured money into infrastructure, but that is not the entire truth. Their plan for infrastructure is simply too little too late. Last year the government slashed the building Canada infrastructure program by 87% from its previous level. This year there has been no real improvement. What has been committed for infrastructure is back loaded until years from now.

A real plan for growth would put in place today a serious infrastructure plan to create jobs and prepare Canada for the changing global economy as well as a changing climate, although I suppose in the latter case one has to believe it is actually happening before one can do anything to address it.

[*Translation*]

To get back to infrastructure and investments, every dollar invested in roads, water or public transit generates \$1.20 in growth. Every dollar invested in affordable housing generates \$1.40 in growth. One billion dollars invested in infrastructure creates 16,000 person-years of good jobs—the kind of jobs Canadians need and are prepared to do. That is an excellent rate of return. That is economic growth.

Modernizing infrastructure facilitates and accelerates commerce. It enables Canadians to get to their destination more quickly and more safely. As I said, smart investments in infrastructure will prepare Canada for the effects of climate change. I should also point out that climate change is not mentioned once in over 500 pages in this budget—not as a reality we face or as an economic challenge. That exclusion speaks volumes. Honestly, a discussion on climate change is not just about science; it is also about the economy. This is a discussion that we need to have in 2015, and the government's complete disregard of this issue is a special kind of failure.

[*English*]

What is the Prime Minister's priority instead; that is, aside from that \$2 billion tax break for the richest Canadians? Advertising. While Canadians have been struggling, the Prime Minister's government has justified spending some \$750 million on advertising to promote things that sometimes do not even exist.

Think about it. That is three-quarters of a billion dollars on TV commercials and billboards, on paid persuasion. This is not fiscal prudence; this is waste, pure and simple. More than that, it is insulting. The Prime Minister must not think much of Canadians to suppose they believe that legitimacy to govern is earned by running a bunch of commercials on TV.

The Budget

Do members know how Canadians know their government is working? I will give them a hint. It is not because they saw a TV ad. They know it when they drive to work on new roads and safer bridges. They know it when a new fleet of buses gets them across town in less time. They know it when we have a plan to address our changing climate. They know it when we have well paying, full-time jobs, and when their kids can go to a good school.

[Translation]

Canadians know that their government is working when they have a real, fair chance to succeed. However, the Prime Minister has no real plan for anything.

Instead, he will spend another \$7.5 million to ensure that this budget looks good on TV. That is not a plan for Canada. That is an advertising plan for the Conservative Party. He is using hard-working Canadians' money to pay for that advertising. That is just plain wrong.

• (1635)

[English]

Generations of Canadians have shown that in our dealings with our friends and with strangers, we strive to be a fair people. Decades before we were even properly a nation, this was a principle to which we knew we must adhere so we would all prosper, whoever we are, wherever we may be from.

A government's budget should not be a marketing tool. It should be a document that, among other things, lays out a road map for how we want our country to look. It is not a callow piece of advertising. It ought to be a fair and compassionate plan, one that is both fiscally and socially responsible. This budget is none of those things. We cannot support it.

Therefore, I move:

That the amendment be amended by adding the following:

- (h) unfairly benefits the rich instead of helping the middle class and those working hard to join it and;
- (i) contains no plan for jobs and growth.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The subamendment is in order.

Questions and comments, the hon. Minister of State for Small Business and Tourism, and Agriculture.

[Translation]

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of State (Small Business and Tourism, and Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the leader of the Liberal Party.

He gave a nice speech about Canada. I would like to tell him that those are fine words, but that in reality, Canada would not enjoy the same economic prosperity if we were to take his approach because it involves spending money that the government does not have. He wants to spend even more money on infrastructure programs than we are doing now, using borrowed money. Like me, the opposition leader knows that today's debts are tomorrow's taxes. What is certain is that Canadians will pay even more taxes under a Liberal government.

How can he justify raising taxes for Canadians and cancelling tax cuts as a way to create prosperity in Canada?

Mr. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question.

The reality is that I will not take any lessons on economic growth from the members of this government. Over the past 10 years, under this Prime Minister, Canada has seen the worst rate of economic growth of any Canadian government since the 1930s and the R.B. Bennett years that followed the Great Depression. The Conservatives did not create any economic growth.

Canadians are well aware that Liberal governments are the ones that balance the budget. This Conservative government created seven consecutive deficits. That is not economic growth. That is not what this country needs. Giving tax cuts to the wealthiest members of society is not the way to create prosperity, and I hope that the government will change its mind in that regard.

[English]

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we take no issue with the concern of the Liberals with respect to income splitting. As we have illuminated since it was first proposed by the government, it is a \$2.5 billion giveaway to the top 15% of Canadian families, while everyone has to foot the bill for it.

I have two questions.

First, the member mentioned a number of places in which there had been research done with respect to the impact of investments in infrastructure and the like, and that there was a healthier return to government for investing in transit and whatnot. We agree as well with that assessment. However, one of the strongest impacts on investment is in affordable child care, that for \$1 put toward affordable child care one receives even more, sometimes as much as \$2.00 to \$2.50.

We put forward an affordable child care proposal of up to \$15 a day. The Conservatives have their strategy, which contrasts dramatically with ours. It offers two different things in different ways. We would say it is not as much. Therefore, I would like a clarification on where the Liberals stand on an affordable child care strategy.

Second, yesterday the Liberal leader stated that the small business tax cut, which we proposed in the House but the Conservatives and Liberals voted against but is now in the budget at a slower pace than what we wanted, needed to be redesigned and that he was opposed to the measure as it was presented yesterday. Could he tell us what it should be redesigned as, or does he want to eliminate that effort to help out small business?

• (1640)

Mr. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley gave an excellent speech earlier in the House opposing the budget.

I will answer both aspects fairly quickly.

The Budget

First, I am incredibly proud of the Liberal plan on child care that involved 10 deals, one with every province, to create child care spaces in 2005. It was a landmark decision that unfortunately both the Conservatives and the NDP voted against. Therefore, we will take no lessons from the NDP on creating national child care spaces.

Second, in terms of the small business tax credit, we are in favour of helping small business. There is no question about that. We are in favour of reducing taxes for small businesses and would not reverse the proposal that the Conservatives have. What I highlighted yesterday and brought forward concerns on was the fact that many studies had highlighted that most or many of the benefits from such a tax break would go to extremely wealthy individuals rather than to hard-working small business workers and employees. That is the concern for us. I hope care is taken when implementing this proposal.

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the Liberal leader, the member for Papineau, for offering some hope to Canadian parents who are looking for a real plan for jobs and growth for today's youth. Today's parents are the first generation of Canadian parents who believe their kids will be worse off than them.

The doubling of the tax-free savings account limit will make things worse by gutting the future capacity of governments. Is the leader of the Liberal Party concerned about the intergenerational equity component of the tax-free savings account in terms of giving a tax break to the rich but potentially making middle-class Canadians pay higher taxes in the future and receive fewer services from government?

Mr. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Kings—Hants for his question and for his excellent work as the Liberal finance critic.

First, we have been very clear. We are in favour of the tax-free savings account. We think that there is a meaningful use to encourage people to save, to set aside a little money at the end of the year in a tax-free way. We need to encourage middle-class Canadians to save for their retirement, and modestly done, this is a good measure. However, doubling the tax-free savings limit to \$10,000 makes it beneficial only to wealthier Canadians.

I have travelled far and wide across this country and had an awful lot of conversations with middle-class Canadians who are struggling with debt at the end of the year every year and certainly do not have \$10,000 to put aside every year to benefit from it, whereas wealthy Canadians absolutely will.

This issue will be very expensive in the short and medium term, but even more expensive in the long term. That is the term in which the Conservatives will be raising the retirement age from 65 to 67, hurting the average senior to the tune of about \$13,000, the most vulnerable seniors to \$28,000 out of their pockets, and those are the wrong priorities.

• (1645)

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have had a lot of feedback, as I am sure all of us have in regard to what was just a terrific budget yesterday, and I particularly heard from a lot of small business owners. I just had an email not very long ago from a small-businessman who started up about five years. The business has built up and it now has 18 employees. It is a

family business. He and his wife were just thrilled to see the small business income tax rate lowered from 11% to 9%. He said that he was as happy as the devil and now he hears that the leader of the third party wants to reverse that if he wins the election.

I want to ask the member how he would respond to that constituent.

Mr. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to tell the member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound that he can tell his constituent that I have no intention of reversing that cut.

What I highlighted yesterday was that the help we give to small businesses, which we absolutely should be giving, should be going to his constituent. It should not instead be going to the likes of Mike Duffy Inc., for example.

There is a concern about the fact that this is a tax benefit that many wealthy individuals could incorporate and benefit from when in fact who we want to support is exactly his constituent, hard-working business owners who employ many employees in a small business capacity because those are the drivers of our economy.

The hon. member can reassure his constituent by actually telling the truth about what I said.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the leader of the Liberal Party if he agrees with the Prime Minister that since 2009, when the Prime Minister made the pledge at the meeting in Pittsburgh of the G20 that this country would stop subsidizing fossil fuels, yet despite his promise, the Prime Minister continues to subsidize fossil fuels in the oil sands, and in this budget, opens up new subsidies for liquified natural gas.

I would like to know if the Liberal leader would commit to ending fossil fuel subsidies in this country.

Mr. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her great work as leader of the Green Party and for her efforts to highlight the fact that the government has not addressed responsibly either climate change or investments in renewables.

There is no question that a Liberal government would start off by recognizing that climate change is a reality and that a federal government needs to work with the provinces on the lack of leadership we have seen over the past ten years in making sure that we put a price on carbon and therefore reduce our emissions.

On the other side, making sure that we are investing in renewables, understanding the extraordinary advantages that come with a Canada that has a strong and vibrant renewable resource sector and making sure that the government incentives are directed toward things that would be good, not just for future generations, but for our economic positioning with our trading partners, is exactly in line with the priorities of the Liberal Party.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of State (Small Business and Tourism, and Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to speak to the House and Canadians who are watching.

The Budget

[English]

I want to let all Canadians know that I am very proud of what my government did in the last budget and for future generations. Our government's most spectacular achievement is the reduction of the tax burden on Canadians. The ratio of government revenue to GDP is at its lowest level in more than 50 years. I think that is a great achievement.

The leader of the Liberal Party promises to reverse this trend. He wants to take back the tax cuts that we gave to Canadians. We want to shrink the government, to give Canadians back their freedom, but the Liberals with their leader want to shrink Canadians' paycheques and take away their freedoms. The Liberals are very clear on what their priorities are. It is not cutting taxes for Canadians. They want to spend more money. They want to spend money to stimulate the economy when we are not in a recession. The leader of the Liberal Party and his finance critics have repeatedly refused to rule out running a deficit again for many more years if they are elected.

The leader of the Liberal Party is saying things about the economy that, for an economist, sound a bit bizarre. When he referred to the government budget last year, he said that there is no need to worry about the deficit, we should aim rather at stimulating the economy and the budget would balance itself.

For the leader of the Liberal Party, the more a government spends, the more it stimulates the economy, the more its revenues will grow and the less we need to worry about the deficit. For him, let us spend our way to prosperity. No, seriously, Canadians know that if we all spend more than we have, we will not get richer. It is called living beyond our means.

I think we have to wonder why the deficit and the debt exploded in the 1970s when his father was the leader of the Liberal Party. Perhaps they were not spending enough. They were spending a lot of money, but it did not create any growth. At the last Liberal convention, they had an economic adviser, Larry Summers. He said that it was alright for a government to spend because we need unconventional support policies for the economy. This is economic jargon for spending without restraint. According to him, accumulating more debt is okay when it serves to stimulate the economy, when we do not have a recession.

We all know that more spending and more borrowing will not act as an economic stimulus but rather as an economic sedative. Less money will be available for the private sector, and it is only private sector entrepreneurs who create wealth.

What the leader of the Liberal Party said yesterday was that he wants to reverse and abolish all tax cuts we are giving to Canadian entrepreneurs. He just said that a couple of minutes ago and he also said the same thing in a video released last year.

The leader of the Liberal Party explained that households and provincial governments in Canada are heavily indebted while the federal government has considerably lowered its debt levels since the 1990s. According to the leader of the Liberal Party, Ottawa is the only entity that has room to rack up more debt. It should therefore step up and spend more to stimulate the economy, when we do not need any stimulus.

● (1650)

For me, this is like a couple who has racked up a large amount of consumer debt on credit cards. They check the invoices for their three credit cards and the husband says to his wife, "We have reached our limit on these two cards, but we still have some credit left on this third one, so we can get richer if we max out this one, too. Let's go shopping." Can anyone imagine a more absurd economic policy?

The leader of the Liberal Party seems to forget that it is the same taxpayers who will have to pay back the debt of all levels of government, municipal, provincial and federal, as well as their own. I am very proud that our government took control of the debt. The debt-to-GDP ratio is at 33% and our goal is to have that ratio at 25% a couple of years from now. At 33%, we have the best performance of all G7 countries.

For Conservatives, debt is not something abstract. Servicing the debt costs taxpayers about \$30 billion a year. This is as much money as the GST brings to government coffers. For us, the more we cut down the size of the debt, the fewer resources we will need to pay the interest, and the more we will be able to afford to cut taxes for Canadians.

The leader of the Liberal Party and his American advisers still believe in the old Canadian theory that says that government can create wealth by spending more money. If the government injects money into the economy, where does it come from? It is not falling from the sky. In reality, every time the government takes an additional \$1 in taxes out of someone's pockets, it is \$1 that person would not be able to spend or invest. When government spending goes up, private spending goes down. There is no wealth creation.

Government borrowing has the same effect. It is like taking a bucket of water from the deep end of the swimming pool and emptying it in the shallow end. Nothing happens. It is this kind of policy that ruined our economy in the 1970s. Prosperity, we all know, does not come from government spending but from entrepreneurial investing. To stimulate the economy, we need to give entrepreneurs the means to create wealth. We need to put in place the best possible conditions to allow the private sector to become more productive by curtailing public spending, cutting taxes, reducing the burden of regulation and signing free trade agreements. Growth and progress depend on economic freedom through less government intervention in our day-to-day lives.

More government spending is not the answer to our social and economic challenges. The task is not to reinvent government; the task is to limit government. Conservatives believe in a smaller government, but the Liberals want a big government because they elevate the government and downgrade the citizens. We want a small government because, ultimately, we support individual freedom and personal responsibility. We have faith in people. We have faith that they have the ability, the dignity and the right to make their own decisions with their money and to determine their own destinies.

The Budget

Soon it will be a time for choosing. People will have to decide if they want to go back to more spending, more borrowing and more debt, and maybe some constitutional crisis because the leader of the Liberal Party wants to interfere in provincial jurisdiction, in education. He said that education is important. We know that education is important, but education is a provincial jurisdiction. He wants to do like his father did and play in the provincial jurisdiction. Conservatives respect the Constitution and think that education is very important for Canadians. This is why we will not interfere in provincial jurisdiction. The provinces know better how to deal with that.

The time will come for Canadians to choose in a couple of months from now. They will have the choice between stability, a steady economic hand under the leadership of the Prime Minister, or instability and maybe some constitutional crisis with leader of the Liberal Party, instability because they want to spend the money we do not have to stimulate the economy when stimulus is not needed because we are not in a recession.

• (1655)

What are we going to do? In the last budget we tabled the balanced budget act. We want to ensure the next generation that nobody will spend money we do not have to create jobs when we know that it is the private sector that is going to do that. It is not the government, it is the private sector. We believe in entrepreneurs. That is why we want to cut their taxes and we also want to cut taxes for all Canadians.

I was very disappointed by the reaction of the leader of the Liberal Party. I know he is taking his advice from an American economist. If we look at what happened in the U.S. a couple of years ago, I think it had the wrong policy. Right now, we have the right policy for the future.

[*Translation*]

I am very proud of our budget. It was hard to achieve a balanced budget. It was not easy because budgets do not balance themselves, as the opposition leader likes to claim. It takes hard work. In 2006, as soon as this government took power, we began to manage Canada's budget responsibly, we created surpluses, we took control of expenses, and we allocated money—\$33 billion—to the public debt.

We went through a global economic crisis that started in the United States and other countries. That affected Canada because businesses export their products to the United States and around the world. They do that because people like their products, which are made very efficiently, making them competitive in foreign markets.

However, when something happens in another country, these entrepreneurs are affected indirectly. We had to create a stimulus program, because we were in a recession, to stimulate the economy. At the time, we told Canadians that it would be temporary and that it was meant to stimulate the economy, but because future generations would have to pay for these current debts, we wanted to stimulate the economy through infrastructure programs that would benefit future generations. That is what we did. We created an infrastructure program that involved considerable spending to meet the country's needs and ensure that future generations could also benefit, but it was a short-term, very targeted stimulus program.

Now we are returning to a balanced budget. How did we do it? We controlled our spending. We froze operating expenditures across the Government of Canada. We imposed the freeze because we knew it was the right thing to do. For politicians, sometimes it is easier to raise taxes to have money and create programs, but that is not the right solution. The solution is to leave money in people's pockets. They are the ones who create wealth. That is why we froze the government's operating budget.

We also fought against tax evasion because the tax system has to be fair for all Canadians. We fought against tax evasion and created good policies. A number of my cabinet colleagues around the table had to make cuts in their respective portfolios because it was our responsibility. We had to get back to a balanced budget, as we promised Canadians we would.

We did the opposite of the previous Liberal government, which eliminated the deficits created by the Trudeau government in the 1970s and inherited by the Mulroney government. Nonetheless, the Mulroney government set the stage for creating wealth by signing free trade agreements. As hon. members will recall, the Liberals were against free trade with the U.S. That free trade agreement made Canada prosper.

We modernized Canada's tax system. When Jean Chrétien's Liberals came to power, everything was in place for revenues to come in to the federal government, provided that spending was under control. Instead of clearing the deficit by looking to their own backyard, they offloaded their deficit onto the provinces. Quebeckers remember the cuts to health care and social services. Mr. Chrétien's Liberal Party cleared its deficit on the backs of the provinces and Canadians. We dealt with our own deficit by making the courageous decisions that needed to be made. That is why I am proud of my government.

Now that our country is prosperous, we have to make sure that Canadians can keep their money in their pockets. What have we done? Since we believe in families and Canadians, we have lowered taxes for Canadians, Canadian families and seniors. This is a fair budget. We have implemented income splitting. Why allow families to split their income? It is a question of fairness, because couples in similar situations should pay the same amount of tax.

• (1700)

For example, a dual-income family earning \$80,000 paid less tax than a single-income family earning the same amount. The single-income family paid more taxes. Couples in families with similar incomes were treated differently. We have solved this problem of discrimination.

The Budget

We have instituted income splitting for seniors as well. Canadians like and use these measures. We have also made it possible for Canadians to shelter savings from taxes thanks to the tax-free savings account. Of those who have opened a TFSA, 60% earn less than \$60,000. That is the middle class. The middle class benefits from these measures. Thanks to economic freedom, the middle class can continue to create wealth.

That is the difference between us, the Liberals and the NDP: we believe in people. If Canada is great and beautiful, it is thanks to Canadians. Canadians make this a great and beautiful country. Canadians work hard and make it possible to have the standard of living that we currently enjoy.

The government makes sure that we have a social network and social programs to meet the needs of Canadians, but prosperity comes from Canadians. That is the difference between us and the opposition parties, which want to tax Canadians. More taxes and more deficits lead to more debt. That debt will have to be repaid in the near future. What is irresponsible is creating debt and deficits in a time of economic prosperity.

That is why we have introduced a bill to mandate balanced budgets in Canada. A balanced budget holds politicians here in the House of Commons accountable. It is easy for a politician to spend money, and as Milton Friedman said, if you are spending somebody else's money you often give bigger gifts.

I want to add that Keynesian measures do not enrich our country. A country gets richer through tax measures that put money back into people's pockets.

Economic prosperity is good for all Canadians, and I would compare it to a rising tide. John F. Kennedy famously likened economic prosperity to a rising tide, saying that when a country becomes prosperous and there is economic growth, it is like a rising tide that lifts all boats.

We need to promote economic prosperity, and that is what this budget does. That is why we are proud of it.

This budget also keeps the government's promises. As the member for Beauce, I personally promised the people of my riding that our government would eliminate the deficit, make sure that we returned to a balanced budget and cut taxes.

Today, I am proud to be able to go back to the people of Beauce and tell them that that mission has been accomplished. We eliminated the deficit, we balanced the budget, we are lowering their taxes and we are going to continue to do so in the future. We say so in our plan.

Next year, we will have a surplus of \$1.4 billion. That money will go into the pockets of taxpayers through other tax cuts, but some of it will go to helping future generations. We want to be responsible and so we will use our surpluses to pay part of the debt so that future generations do not have too heavy a burden to bear.

I am very proud to rise in the House today and show Canadians that they have a choice to make in the coming weeks. That choice will be very clear when the next election takes place: prosperity or debt, lower taxes or higher taxes, failure to comply with the Constitution and interference in other jurisdictions by the NDP and

the Liberals or compliance with the Constitution, economic prosperity or economic uncertainty.

The choice is clear. The past is an indication of what the future holds. We have managed the government's budget very effectively, and we are going to continue to do so.

• (1705)

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, the member for Beauce and Minister of State for Small Business and Tourism, and Agriculture, for his speech, but there were so many non sequiturs in it that I hardly know where to begin.

First, I am glad that he mentioned that he is an economist because given the things he has supported in the past, when it comes to credibility, there are a few things we could discuss.

Among other things, I know that my hon. colleague has supported zero inflation and a return to the gold standard. I would like him to comment on that. I have not had time to read his blog in a while.

As for the Conservative government's policies on balancing the budget, Jim Flaherty said in 2013 that using the employment insurance surplus to balance the budget, as the Liberals had done in the past, was out of the question for the Conservative government.

What are we seeing though? We have a \$1.4 billion surplus, most of which comes from the projected employment insurance surplus of \$1.8 billion. Without that surplus, which is presently in the general revenue fund, the Conservatives would not have balanced the budget.

Would my colleague mind commenting on what appears to be a contradiction of the promises made by the Conservative government's former finance minister?

Hon. Maxime Bernier: Mr. Speaker, it is simple. We told Canadians that we would freeze employer and employee contributions to employment insurance and that is what we did.

The good news is that in the budget, we told entrepreneurs and Canadians that we would gradually lower their employment insurance contributions in 2016-17 and 2017-18. That is a responsible policy.

I disagree with my colleague when he says that we cleared the deficit with unfair budget measures. We cleared the deficit by making tough decisions, going after tax evasion and ensuring that Canadian public servants have benefits equivalent to those of Canadian workers who pay for their benefits.

I am talking about sick leave for people who are truly sick, not for people who are well enough to work. We are going to allow our public servants to have short-term sick leave and make sure they do not get any more benefits than the rest of Canadians get. The Government of Canada will save \$900 billion by doing so.

The Budget

• (1710)

[English]

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Trinity—Spadina, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a couple of quick comments. The member opposite said he was worried that the Liberal leader was taking advice from an American. I would like to inform him that Mr. Friedman is also an American. However, I am not sure it is the origin of the advice but rather the quality of the advice that is in question here.

As for the Constitution, the Conservatives Party has gone to the Supreme Court 10 times and lost 10 in a row. That is the constitutional record of a party that has no regard for the Constitution whatsoever.

I am curious about this mythical couple that has three credit cards and still has a little borrowing capacity. The response of the member and the government is that the only thing this couple should do is pay down their debt. Does the member opposite not also realize that they could take that remaining credit, perhaps build an extension on their house, invest in much better insulation and thereby create jobs for people who do renovations?

Perhaps they could take in a boarder and create some income, so they could cut their costs, save the environment, provide housing for someone, create income and savings, and pay down their debt all at the same time while growing their economic base and their economic capacity.

Is that not also a vision that could be embraced as one that is positive for more than just people holding the debt but in fact for the whole community?

[Translation]

Hon. Maxime Bernier: Mr. Speaker, I was talking about consumer debt related to credit cards. What matters most is the relationship between consumer debt from credit cards and deficits accumulated during periods of economic growth. When one has consumer debt, it is important to pay it off before taking on more. We already have a huge debt, and the leader of the Liberal Party wants to increase the deficit and put future generations further into debt.

We, however, think that Canadians are responsible. When they have credit card debt, they want to pay it off first in order to enjoy life. As the saying goes, "He who pays his debts grows rich." That is what matters. That is what the federal government is doing and what families are doing.

We are encouraging people to save using tax-free savings accounts. This allows Canadians, once they have paid off their debts, to accumulate wealth and save without paying taxes.

[English]

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer, CPC): Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of State, I too have great pride in this balanced budget.

I have a couple of thoughts on what I heard in the earlier speeches. We heard about cuts to health care. We heard about cuts as far as money going into infrastructure. Of course, we recognize that it is the political posturing that they are trying to work on.

Could the minister explain to members on the other side about the extra money that is going into each of those areas, so that we do not have to continuously hear that type of talk from the other side?

[Translation]

Hon. Maxime Bernier: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question.

As a Quebecker, I am very proud that we have increased transfers to the provinces every year. It is important to mention that Quebec, my own province, today will receive more than \$20 billion in federal transfers.

That includes \$10 billion in equalization payments, because Quebec is a have-not province that receives money from the other provinces. My personal hope is that Quebec will become a have province and will no longer require equalization payments. However, Quebec receives \$10 billion in equalization payments and \$10 billion in health and social transfers. This money makes it possible for the Quebec government to balance its budget, which it is currently in the process of doing.

It is also a matter of fairness for Canadians so that they can have the same services across the country. That is why we have an equalization formula. It allows the poorest provinces to provide the same services as the richest provinces. I can reassure all Canadians that we have increased all transfers to Canadian provinces and that they will continue to increase at the rate of inflation.

• (1715)

Mr. François Lapointe (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to be able to ask my colleague opposite a question. Yesterday, he was interviewed by Gérald Fillion, an excellent Radio-Canada journalist who specializes in economic affairs. Mr. Fillion told him that the problem with income splitting and increasing the contribution limit for tax-free savings accounts was that the wealthiest of the wealthy would be able to benefit outrageously from the measures introduced by the government in this budget. It was fascinating to see how my colleague was unable to refute what Mr. Fillion was saying.

The wealthiest members of our society will benefit outrageously from these measures at a time when the debt of middle-class households in Canada is at a record high. It is not the federal government or the wealthiest members of society who are having problems with debt right now. It is people in the middle class. However, this budget shows that the Conservatives do not care about them at all.

I would like to make one last point, which is fairly unbelievable. My colleague indicated—much like someone would say that the air smells fresh or the sun gives light—that if a government invests less, then the private sector will invest more. According to the former finance minister of their own party, the largest corporations are sitting on over \$600 billion because of tax cuts, and that money is not being reinvested.

The Budget

Hon. Maxime Bernier: Mr. Speaker, we realize that Canadians have debt. That is a fact. That is why we want to lower their taxes, so that they can pay down this debt and have more money in their pockets. That is a no-brainer. That is also why we created the TFSA, the tax-free savings account, to help them save tax-free money for the future.

I would like to tell my colleague that more than half of the people who have tax-free savings accounts earn less than \$42,000 a year. I would consider that the middle class. They benefit from the ability to invest in a tax-free savings account.

If we look at all of the measures for families in this budget, an average Canadian family with two kids—so four people—will save \$6,600 in taxes this year.

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House to talk about the budget that was tabled yesterday by the Minister of Finance. I am pleased because this will give me an opportunity to respond to many of the issues raised yesterday by our Conservative friends, particularly the minister of state who just gave a speech himself. These are issues that we regularly hear about in the media but that are not based on truth.

With regard to the budget, Canadians should see the way the Conservatives are boasting about balancing the budget and creating tools like TFSAs. We are not opposed to TFSAs. The principle is excellent. That is why the argument that the minister of state is making that many Canadians and Quebecers are investing in TFSAs is true. The Conservatives did not create the TFSA in this budget; rather, they increased the contribution limit to \$10,000.

This is just one example of many that I am going to try to talk about in my speech. These examples clearly show that the Conservatives are not serious about the economy, that they have no economic credibility and that the budget is about politics rather than economics.

Let us take, for example, the statement that with this budget, the government has finally balanced the budget. Good job. The Conservatives are boasting about the sacrifices that had to be made, but they are not the ones who had to make them. Quebecers and Canadians are the ones who have suffered as a result of the many cuts made over the past five years. These cuts did not get rid of fat in the system. They got rid of some meat and bones. By that I mean that Environment Canada's budget was cut by 50% at a time when we are talking about the importance of combatting climate change and on the eve of the Paris conference.

The balanced budget was also achieved thanks in large part to major cuts to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, rail transportation inspection and the Canadian Coast Guard. All of these cuts have hurt Canadians. We have seen recent examples of how Canadians have been affected, such as the listeriosis crisis and the recent spill off the coast of Vancouver that the Canadian Coast Guard was unable to respond to properly. The Kitsilano base had been closed to save a few bucks. The same thing was supposed to happen to the maritime search and rescue centre in Quebec City, which the Conservatives threatened to close to save \$1 million. That \$1 million keeps boaters in the Gulf of St. Lawrence and the estuary safe. Those boaters, particularly francophone ones, would have been in jeopardy.

With respect to cuts that were really to the bone, funding for scientific institutions was slashed and institutions were closed. There is a perfect example of that in my part of the country: the Maurice Lamontagne Institute. This world-class institute suffered huge cuts that are now preventing it from doing proper monitoring of the quality of the St. Lawrence River and research on the species there and how they live.

We have talked about veterans plenty of times. Not only that, but we have also seen another one of the Conservative government's tactics, which involves not spending a significant amount of the money Parliament allocated. In the case of veterans, that amount was over \$1 billion. My colleague from Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, who is also the NDP critic for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, mentioned that the same thing happened with money that Canada Economic Development was supposed to invest in Quebec: the money was not invested. In 2010 and 2011 alone, \$132 million was not invested. The regions of Quebec, regions like the Lower St. Lawrence, the Gaspé, Abitibi-Témiscamingue and Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean, desperately need that money.

The Conservative ministers did not make any sacrifices. Given how they laugh at what we say, they were more than happy to see their responsibilities diminish. They were happy to be able to wash their hands of the consequences of their actions. In the end, those sacrifices seriously affected all Canadians, especially workers and the middle class.

● (1720)

Let us come back to balancing the budget. Yes, the Conservatives did it. The budget projects a \$1.4 billion surplus for next year. The Conservatives had to jump through hoops to achieve that. They would not have been able to do it without dipping into the contingency fund, which is \$2 billion, and without the sale of the government's GM shares, which it sold just to be able to balance the budget. The shares sold for roughly \$3 billion.

Nonetheless, when Peter Mansbridge was talking about the budget with the Minister of Finance last night on television, he told the minister that if the Canadian government had waited to sell its shares, then in just one week it could have made an extra \$100 million. The federal government is losing an estimated \$3.5 billion on its investment in the automotive industry. The Conservatives were so anxious to achieve a superficially balanced budget that they sold these shares even though it meant giving up \$3.5 billion and the extra \$100 million we would have made if they had just waited until now.

Private Members' Business

That is not all. They also dipped into the EI fund surplus in order to balance their budget. The projected surplus for the employment insurance fund is \$1.8 billion. The projected budget surplus is \$1.4 billion. As I mentioned in my question to the minister of state, in December 2013, the hon. Jim Flaherty, who was the Minister of Finance at the time, made a solemn promise in front of the media. He said:

• (1725)

[English]

“We do not take EI funds and use them to balance the budget. That's what the Liberals did”.

[Translation]

Those were the words of the finance minister at the time. However, that is exactly what the current Minister of Finance is doing with employment insurance, and he is using it to claim a balanced budget for next year.

I see this budget as an intellectual exercise that is a little flexible when it comes to honesty. According to the Conservatives' arguments, they are giving money back to everyone. However, upon analyzing these measures, such as income splitting and the increased TFSA limit, we can clearly see that the wealthy are the ones who will benefit.

The comparisons made by the Conservatives and the claims that they are eliminating discrimination make no sense. Take the example of spouses who earn \$30,000 each. That is a total of \$60,000. They each earn that much, but not necessarily because they want to. However, it is hard to raise one, two, three or four children with a single income of \$30,000. Obviously, they will both have to work in order to make ends meet.

However, here is what they will do. They will ensure that one spouse earns \$60,000 while the other spouse—often a woman these days—stays at home. This couple will benefit from income splitting, while the spouses who can barely make ends meet earning \$30,000 each and have to send their kids to day care so that both spouses can work will not get anything. The measure significantly benefits couples that have higher incomes. I would even go further. This is a clear incentive on the part of the Conservatives to encourage women to stay at home, which I do not find surprising in light of their ideology and what we have seen from some Conservative members.

It has been proven in Quebec that a public child care program not only increases productivity and provides access to the labour market, but can also stimulate the economy because of the investments made in the communities where these child care centres are located. This has been proven by economists, not Americans, whom my hon. colleague was criticizing, but Quebec economists who have studied the impact of a Quebec child care program on the Quebec economy. That is one of the reasons why we want to export that model. We want all of Canada to benefit. It is also one of the reasons why we are insisting on negotiating with the provinces in order to establish this national child care program charging a maximum of \$15 a day.

This model has worked well in Quebec, and could work well in the rest of Canada. According to the principles of asymmetrical federalism, given that Quebec already has a program, it would of course have the right to opt out with compensation.

I will have the opportunity to finish my speech tomorrow. However, it is clear that the Conservative government did not table a budget that helps the middle class and workers and ensures that the government is doing its part to have a sound economy.

On the contrary, this budget is simply a political pamphlet in advance of the next election. I will be able to show why this pamphlet does not match the realities of Canadian and Quebec families and workers. We will have plenty of time before the next election to show that with this budget and their actions over the past four years, the Conservatives are leading us toward a dead end.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member will have almost exactly nine minutes left to complete his speech when the debate resumes.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1730)

[Translation]

INTERN PROTECTION ACT

The House resumed from April 20 consideration of the motion that Bill C-636, An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code (unpaid training), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-636, under private members' business.

Call in the members.

• (1810)

[English]

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

(Division No. 377)

YEAS

Members

Adams	Allen (Welland)
Andrews	Angus
Ashton	Atamanenko
Aubin	Ayala
Bélanger	Bellavance
Bennett	Benskin
Bevington	Blanchette
Blanchette-Lamothe	Boivin
Borg	Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet	Brahmi
Brisson	Brosseau
Byrne	Caron
Casey	Cash
Charlton	Chicoine
Chisholm	Choquette
Christopherson	Cleary
Comartin	Côté
Cotler	Crowder
Cullen	Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver East)	Day
Dewar	Dion
Dionne Labelle	Donnelly
Doré Lefebvre	Dubé

Private Members' Business

Dubourg	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Dusseau	Eyking
Footé	Fortin
Freeland	Freeman
Fry	Garneau
Garrison	Genest
Genest-Jourdain	Giguère
Goldring	Goodale
Groghé	Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Harris (St. John's East)	Hsu
Hughes	Jones
Julian	Kellway
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Latendresse	Laverdière
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Leslie	Liu
Mai	Marston
Masse	Mathysen
May	McCallum
McGuinity	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Michaud	Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)	Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)	Mourani
Murray	Nantel
Nash	Nicholls
Nunez-Melo	Pacetti
Papillon	Patry
Péclet	Pilon
Rafferty	Rankin
Rathgeber	Raynault
Regan	Rousseau
Saganash	Sandhu
Scarpaleggia	Scott
Sellah	Sgro
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)	Stewart
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	Sullivan
St-Denis	Tremblay
Stoffer	Valériote
Toone	
Trudeau	
Vaughan— 125	

NAYS

Members

Ablonczy	Adler
Aglukkaq	Albas
Allison	Ambler
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Armstrong
Aspin	Barlow
Bateman	Benoit
Bergen	Bernier
Bezan	Blaney
Block	Boughen
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Butt
Calandra	Calkins
Cannan	Carmichael
Carrie	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Crockatt	Daniel
Davidson	Dechert
Devolin	Dreeshen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Dykstra
Eglinski	Falk
Fantino	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Fletcher	Galipeau
Gallant	Gill
Goguen	Goodyear
Gosal	Gourde
Grewal	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hayes
Hilmyer	Hoback
Holder	James
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kennedy (Calgary Southeast)	Kent
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauzon	Leaf
Leitch	Lemieux
Leung	Lizon

Lobb	Lukiwski
Lunney	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Maguire
McColeman	McLeod
Menegakis	Miller
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Nicholson
Norlock	O'Neill Gordon
Opitz	O'Toole
Paradis	Payne
Perkins	Poilievre
Preston	Raitt
Rajotte	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Saxton	Schellenberger
Seeback	Shea
Shipley	Shory
Smith	Sopuck
Sorenson	Stanton
Storseth	Strahl
Sweet	Trost
Trottier	Truppe
Uppal	Valcourt
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Wallace	Warawa
Warkentin	Watson
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	Williamson
Wilks	Woodworth
Wong	Young (Vancouver South)
Young (Oakville)	Zimmer— 136
Yurdiga	

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on Motion No. 550 under private members' business in the name of Mr. Eyking.

* * *

RAIL SERVICE

The House resumed from April 20 consideration of the motion.

● (1815)

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

*(Division No. 378)***YEAS**

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Allen (Welland)
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambler	Ambrose
Anderson	Andrews
Angus	Armstrong
Ashton	Aspin
Atamanenko	Aubin
Ayala	Barlow
Bateman	Bélanger
Bellavance	Bennett
Benoit	Benskin
Bergen	Bernier
Bevington	Bezan
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe
Blaney	Block
Boivin	Borg
Boughen	Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet	Brahmi
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brisson	Brosseau
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Butt

Byrne
Calkins
Carmichael
Carrie
Cash
Chicoine
Chong
Christopherson
Cleary
Comartin
Cotler
Crowder
Cuzner
Davidson
Day
Devolin
Dion
Donnelly
Dreeshen
Dubourg
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Dykstra
Eyking
Fantino
Fletcher
Fortin
Freeman
Galipeau
Garneau
Genest
Giguère
Goguen
Goodale
Gosal
Grewal
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hayes
Hoback
Hsu
James
Julian
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kerr
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lamoureux
Latendresse
Laverdière
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Leitch
Leslie
Liu
Lobb
Lunney
MacKenzie
Mai
Masse
May
McColeman
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Menegakis
Miller
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Mourani
Nantel
Nicholls
Norlock
O'Neill Gordon
O'Toole
Papillon
Patry
Péclet
Pilon
Preston
Raitt
Rankin
Regan
Rempel
Rousseau
Sandhu
Scarpaleggia
Scott

Calandra
Cannan
Caron
Casey
Charlton
Chisholm
Choquette
Clarke
Clement
Côté
Crockatt
Cullen
Daniel
Davies (Vancouver East)
Dechert
Dewar
Dionne Labelle
Doré Lefebvre
Dubé
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dusseault
Eglinski
Falk
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Foote
Freeland
Fry
Gallant
Garrison
Genest-Jourdain
Gill
Goldring
Goodyear
Gourde
Grogulé
Harris (St. John's East)
Hawn
Hillyer
Holder
Hughes
Jones
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kellway
Kent
Komarnicki
Lake
Lapointe
Lauzon
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
Leaf
Lemieux
Leung
Lizon
Lukivski
MacKay (Central Nova)
Maguire
Marston
Mathysen
McCallum
McGuinty
McLeod
Michaud
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Murray
Nash
Nicholson
Nunez-Melo
Opitz
Pacetti
Paradis
Payne
Perkins
Poilievre
Rafferty
Rajotte
Raynault
Reid
Richards
Saganash
Saxton
Schellenberger
Seeback

Sellah
Shea
Shory
Sims (Newton—North Delta)
Sopuck
Stanton
Stewart
Storseth
Sullivan
Toone
Trost
Trudeau
Uppal
Valerioté
Van Loan
Wallace
Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)
Wilks
Wong
Young (Oakville)
Yurdiga

Sgro
Shipley
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
Smith
Sorenson
St-Denis
Stoffer
Strahl
Sweet
Tremblay
Trotter
Truppe
Valcourt
Van Kesteren
Vaughan
Warawa
Watson

NAYS

Nil

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

* * *

JOURNEY TO FREEDOM ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill S-219, An Act respecting a national day of commemoration of the exodus of Vietnamese refugees and their acceptance in Canada after the fall of Saigon and the end of the Vietnam War, as reported (without amendment) from the committee

● (1820)

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Deputy Speaker: There are three motions in amendment standing on the notice paper for the report stage of Bill S-219.

[Translation]

Motions Nos. 1 and 2 will not be selected by the Chair, because they could have been presented in committee.

[English]

Motion No. 3 will be debated and voted upon.

[Translation]

I will now put Motion No. 3 to the House.

[English]

MOTION IN AMENDMENT

Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Ind.), seconded by the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, moved:

That Bill S-219 be amended by deleting Clause 2.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I understand that the bill is slightly controversial but I think everybody is in favour.

Private Members' Business

I am pleased to rise today to speak to my proposed amendment. I know I had proposed various amendments and they were all for the same reason.

We are speaking on Bill S-219, the journey to freedom day act. From the outset, I would like to say that I am not opposed to this bill. All of my proposed amendments, deleting lines 7 to 13 of the preamble on page 1, deleting lines 16 to 30 of the preamble on page 2, which you ruled out of order, and that which you have accepted, deleting clause 2, are due to the fact that these clauses all contain April 30 as the date to mark the journey to freedom day. As we heard in committee, there is no consensus within the Vietnamese community that the date is appropriate.

The purpose of these deletions is to allow the bill to pass while providing the government an opportunity to go back and consult with the Vietnamese Canadian community and select a date upon which a broad consensus exists. The reasons that a consensus does not exist are because: April 30 is the anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War, which would make journey to freedom day synonymous with a historical event that Canada did not play a significant role in; it would take away the focus from Canada's role in settling displaced Vietnamese people and place it on the many points of contention surrounding the Vietnam War; and, it risks making journey to freedom day political when it should not be.

It would be unfortunate if Parliament passed this bill only for it to sow division. We instead seek to create a uniquely Canadian day to commemorate the Vietnamese community's acceptance into Canada and its achievements thereafter.

I can propose a few dates, but they are dates that we got from reading the minutes at committee and through speaking to some constituents.

For example, July 27 is a possible alternative because it is the day that the Department of National Defence's Operation Magnet II began making its flights of displaced Vietnamese people, also known as boat people, to Canada.

May 1 is also a possible alternative because it is the day that the Canadian government declared it would sponsor refugees with relatives already in Canada.

June 20 is a possible alternative because every year the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees marks World Refugee Day on June 20, which I think is important. On June 20, 1986, the Nansen Refugee Award was awarded to the people of Canada by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees due in large part to Canada's role in welcoming Vietnamese refugees into Canada.

I do not want to say that I have a preference for any of these dates because that would be contradictory to my first statement, that I would prefer to have the Vietnamese community, along with government, decide on a consensual date where everybody would be happy.

I have always believed that one of the greatest humanitarian contributions we can make in times of international crisis is to open our borders in order to welcome those who are forced to escape perilous circumstances abroad. Journey to freedom day has the potential to celebrate such noble actions quite admirably. It can also

highlight the positive impact that Canada made during a time of crisis by virtue of being a welcoming and compassionate nation while celebrating the numerous achievements by Vietnamese Canadians who have enriched Canada ever since. Making these the exclusive focus of the journey to freedom day act would be the most beneficial. The day could then serve as a reminder to Canadians that our generosity in difficult times can make a lasting impact that betters our country and the world we live in. This is why I believe it is important to choose a date that does not obscure these goals in any way or divide Canadians, especially those of Vietnamese origin, and that we can move on constructively.

On a personal note, I have received correspondence from Vietnamese in my community who are in favour of the bill. However, the controversy is the date. That is one of the reasons that I propose that we go back and try to have my amendments passed in the House as well as have the bill approved at third reading in the next couple of weeks before the House rises.

• (1825)

Mr. Mark Adler (York Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to rise today to speak to Bill S-219, journey to freedom day act. I am co-sponsoring this bill with Senator Ngo from the other place.

It is important, however, contrary to what we just heard earlier from the other speaker, that April 30 is designated as journey to freedom day. It is important that this is the date the community has agreed upon. This is the date the community wants.

I presented a petition in the House of Commons signed by 2,620 people of Vietnamese Canadian origin just a little while ago. In addition, we had committee hearings at the heritage committee where we heard from various members of the community, including James Nguyen, president of the Vietnamese Association Toronto. He said:

As a leader of the biggest Vietnamese community in Canada, I attend many events on a weekly basis. There is overwhelming support for this bill whenever the conversation comes up. This bill is important to me and to those I encounter in the community, because it acknowledges our heritage. April 30 is a day for Vietnamese Canadians to come together to express our gratitude to Canadians for welcoming us with open arms.

The community wants April 30. This is the day the saga of the Vietnamese boat people began. Let us not forget that April 30, 1975 was the day the communist forces from North Vietnam occupied and conquered the south. They took over Saigon and as a result almost two million people fled South Vietnam. They fled persecution. They fled political imprisonment. They fled, in a lot of instances, death.

Some 250,000 boat people who went on rafts, that were put together with logs and rope, and crossed the seas succumbed to murder by pirates, rape, sexual assault, drowning, thirst, and hunger.

In 1980, some 120,000 were accepted here in Canada. In 1986, Canada was awarded the Nansen medal. There are 300,000 Canadians of Vietnamese origin now living in Canada. It is important to Vietnamese Canadians, who all agree, that April 30, journey to freedom day, is the day that is recognized by the community and by this House of Commons.

Private Members' Business

It is important. I have many people in my community of Vietnamese origin who have told me that April 30 is the day. Canada is a country made up of people that have all come from somewhere else. We all come here for pretty much the same reasons: to escape persecution, to escape hatred, and to escape violence. We come here because we want the opportunity and the hope that Canada has to offer us, for ourselves and more importantly, for our kids.

In the late 1970s and 1980s when Canada opened its doors to so many Vietnamese boat people, that boat became a symbol. It is a metaphor for freedom, for a journey to freedom. That is why April 30 is the date the community wants, the date that Saigon fell to communist forces.

Many Canadians do not know the story of Vietnamese boat people. This day, April 30, is the day Saigon fell, the day when the exodus of people from South Vietnam began, the day that Canadians will learn what people will do and to what extent they will go to escape persecution, to embrace freedom for themselves and for their families.

This is so significant. This is an important date. The young people here in Canada must know April 30 as the date. This bill will serve a pedagogical purpose. It will educate young Canadians and Canadians alike of the importance of what we have here in Canada, the great Canadian values of freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

This is also a celebration. This bill is a celebration of Canada. It is a celebration of Canadian values that we here in Canada, in 1980, opened up our arms to welcome boat people, people who had absolutely nothing. My dad was a survivor of the Holocaust and he came here with only the shirt on his back.

Many people, not just Vietnamese, have come to Canada with the very same, just the shirt on their backs and some change in their pockets to make Canada their home because Canada offers hope and opportunity for people.

• (1830)

I will tell the House that people in my community want April 30 as the day to mark this. Forty years have gone by now and we have an opportunity in the House to do the right thing, to say to the Vietnamese Canadian community that, yes, Saigon fell on April 30. That is the day that the journey to freedom began, which ended up here in Canada, where now some 300,000 Canadians of Vietnamese origin live.

On the weekend, I was at the North York Vietnamese seniors club. There were many people there, both young and old alike, who came on these makeshift boats. Some came as babes in arms. All remember the experience and all are so grateful to Canada. This date is very important for them. We must do the right thing here in Canada.

People say we have not heard from the community, but the community has been heard. The community has spoken. The community has said April 30 is the day. Some say we need to hear from the government of Vietnam or its representatives. It is not the practice of this Parliament or any other democratic parliament around the world to hear from representatives of foreign governments when it comes to passing domestic legislation, and we should

not bend to the pressure from that embassy or any other embassy. When we pass legislation in the House, it is because the will of the people has tasked us to do that. We are responsible to the Canadian people, not to people in another country.

Vietnamese Canadians have spoken. They have sent many of us here, just like other Canadians, to get the job done, and the job in this piece of legislation is to designate April 30 as journey to freedom day.

• (1835)

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am rising today to speak about Bill S-219. I just listened to what the sponsor of the bill said, and I would like to clarify something. The member said that he speaks on behalf of the community. Being a member of Vietnamese origin, I can say that I have listened to what the community has said. To be honest, I think the member is not listening to what everyone has to say.

It is a divisive bill. I am not saying that April 30 is not the right date. What I am saying is that it is not unanimous. It has created a division. I find it very unfortunate.

One of the ways we could have gone forward and brought the Vietnamese community together was by doing something more concrete. I have listened to a lot of people in my riding from the Vietnamese community who have told me that one of the main issues for them is human rights issues in Vietnam. What we are doing here is not even addressing that issue.

I heard a lot of comments when the senator talked about the bill. There were no specific things brought forward to deal with the issues that affect people in Vietnam. There is a subcommittee for international human rights that is actually looking into the human rights situation in Vietnam. It heard from Viet Tan, for instance, an organization that spoke about some of the issues the Vietnamese have to deal with.

I will read something from my colleague on the other side, the member for Fleetwood—Port Kells, a Conservative member, who yesterday at the committee said, “The Vietnamese government continues to be a violator in a broad area of human rights and is among the worst violators of religious freedom in the world. The international community must exert pressure on the Vietnamese government to cease these abuses against its own citizens”.

Even when we hear alarm bells coming from the Conservatives, the only thing they can come up with is this bill.

There are only three articles. I will read from the bill. The first one is:

This Act may be cited as the Journey to Freedom Day Act.

That is the short title. The second one is:

Throughout Canada, in each and every year, the thirtieth day of April shall be known as “Journey to Freedom Day”.

Article three, the last one, is:

For greater certainty, Journey to Freedom Day is not a legal holiday or a non-judicial day.

Private Members' Business

These are the only articles that will stay after the bill is adopted. All the discussion about the preamble, with all the divisiveness that has come up, and the issues we heard from all sides, will not be in the final text of the legislation. Instead of using a bill to bring Vietnamese together, what the Conservatives have done is divide the Vietnamese community.

To be clear, I will be supporting the bill. I voted for it at second reading and I will vote for it at third reading.

There is a big fundraising rally for the Vietnamese boat people museum. This is a way of learning about the history of Vietnam and what happened after April 30. It will actually be the 40th anniversary this year. There are so many stories of Vietnamese boat people leaving Vietnam.

I invite all members to watch the documentary *Bolinao 52*. It is a documentary that follows a group of boat people through their journey. Why 52? It is because 52 out of 110 people survived. The rest of them died.

There are a lot of ways for us as members of Parliament and for the government to bring forward tools for other generations to know what happened.

● (1840)

I saw the documentary with my mother. It was organized as a fundraiser for the Vietnamese museum. I think that is one way of bringing people together. Everyone agrees that we have to remember our roots. In my case, my Vietnamese roots are part of who I am, and it is really important for me to learn about them.

However, we have a bill that actually does not say much and actually does not do much. I agree with the member when he said that April 30 is already a day when people in the community are celebrating. For instances, this weekend I will be in Montreal celebrating April 30. For me, it is different. Everyone sees the day differently. For me, it is a day to remember my roots and to commemorate all the sacrifices my parents made to come to Canada and for me to actually be here today in the House.

I mentioned human rights in Vietnam. Right now what has been done is basically that an issue has been brought up that is divisive but does not bring anything in return. We have seen what happens when the current government deals with trade agreements. I will give the example of Honduras. The reason the NDP opposed it is that when the government actually negotiated the agreement, it never talked about human rights. Honduras is not the best place on earth in terms of protecting human rights. When the government could actually talk about human rights and negotiate human rights, it did not do it. It is the same thing with the Liberals, who actually supported it.

What we get from the other side is basically, "Let's negotiate a trade agreement. Let's help develop it. After that, eventually everything will be cleared up and the human rights issues will be resolved". However, at the end of the day, we have to negotiate now.

The reason I am talking about this, if members would listen, is that right now there are negotiations regarding a trans-Pacific partnership agreement, and we have not heard the government talk about human rights when it talks about negotiations.

What people in Vietnam and people from the community are saying is that we need to help people in Vietnam. What we are talking about is a bill that is divisive and is not bringing things forward. It is not helping people in Vietnam. That is why what we are offering on this side are solutions. Right now, the solution is negotiations and talks.

I invite the member who is heckling over there to listen to what was said at the subcommittee meeting yesterday. There was a subcommittee meeting in Parliament regarding human rights in Vietnam. Before coming here, I actually watched the whole thing and listened to it. For me, it is important. It is a way of bringing things forward and making sure that we do not forget our past. For me this is really important, because it is part of who I am. That is why I mentioned to the member who is heckling on the other side that instead of bringing forward something that is so divisive, why not help the Vietnamese museum of boat people? Why not help people in Vietnam right now? That would have been a way to bring people together. That would have been a way to move forward. That would have been a way to actually improve things, not just here but in other countries.

Again, the bill we have here today is being used sort of as a tool, and it is unfortunate.

It is too easy to generalize by saying that the community is united for it or against it. We understand the differences. As I said, for me it is a way to remember my roots, to remember my origins, to remember where my parents came from, and to remember the people from Vietnam. It is a way for me to see how great it is for us to live in Canada, where they actually open the door and where people of different origins are welcome.

● (1845)

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague, the previous speaker, said it all. He outlined his concerns about it, as I have. I imagine many have. The government continues to use important communities like this as nothing more than wedges to divide communities, not build them.

We have to understand what our role is as parliamentarians. It is about uniting people. It is about helping communities to get strong and build. It is about helping communities to go forward. It is about celebrating special days within that community. The way to do that is by consultation, and that means thorough and proper consultation.

As my NDP colleague has pointed out, the bill would divide the community immensely. Rather than have it united, as my Conservative colleague, the mover of the bill, would have us think that everyone was in agreement, if everybody were in agreement, then we would all be very happy today to deal with the bill at this point. The problem is that all are not happy.

We never get 100% at any given time on an issue, but there are as many people against this as there appear to be for this. Those of us who represent a large Vietnamese community in particular have been bombarded with all sides of this issue. When I speak to it today, it is of mixed feelings on both sides because it is a community that I represent.

Private Members' Business

I happen to work a lot with the Vietnamese community, and I support it immensely. People are flagging all these issues about not voting for Bill S-219 because it is not the right day. The senator changed the title, which the people were satisfied with, but there was very limited consultation. I believe there was one day of debate at the Senate level and when it came here, it was again very limited debate and discussion at committee.

Many of the people who have written to me and talked to me have said that they wanted to get to the committee when it came up, but it was not even listed on the parliamentary agenda. It suddenly appeared on the agenda and they did not have time to get here. When some of them did come very quickly for the meeting, they were denied the opportunity to speak because there was only so much time.

That is the way the government plays the wedge politics of pitting one part of a community against another. It does not give time for full discussion. What is the problem with taking extra time to ensure that as parliamentarians we get it right so we can support a bill that unites a community? The goal may have been right, but more time was needed to ensure that we had it right, which is why it gives many of us such difficulty trying to figure out how to deal with the bill.

I want to recognize my colleague, who is the party's critic on this. Again, we all try to do what is right but what is right for everyone, not just what is right for a handful of people who suit the government's requirements. We want to do something that is right for everyone.

As I said, I have had so many emails, petitions and so on, asking that we recognize it as a day of celebration, but not April 30. There has been a lot of correspondence for everyone in this. As their MP, I have come to know the people in the community very well and I want to honour them as we go forward.

I will be part of a special commemoration this coming Saturday at Nathan Phillips Square. I have attended it for many years. I speak to hundreds of veterans to remember that day, and we remember the over 250,000 Vietnamese who died fleeing that regime. They died of starvation, or in the ocean or wherever. It is a commemoration like Remembrance Day. It is a day of sadness to remember what happened.

● (1850)

The people that I am talking to in the community want to see a day that is a celebration of all the positive things that have happened as a result of the Vietnamese community coming to Canada, the successful families that they have raised, the businesses that are now operated by successful Vietnamese members of the community. They think it is a great honour to have a day to celebrate all of their achievements in this country that they now call home.

April 30, as the senator initially had for the name of the day, is a black day because it is a day of sadness. April 30 is not a day to celebrate all the great things that people in the Vietnamese community have done in Canada. It is a day on which they remember the fall of Saigon and the ultimate exodus of thousands and thousands of refugees from Vietnam. It is a day that we always recognize at Nathan Phillips Square and other places as a day of

sadness and a day of acknowledging the many men and women who live in Canada who were part of the military that fled. They stand in uniform and remember that day as a day of sadness. I believe what the community would like to have is a day to celebrate the Vietnamese community. That is a day that I would love to see happen. That is where the concern is, that the day is seen as being a black day rather than a day of celebration.

That is why I have tremendous concerns about how to deal with this issue. This is a private member's bill, so we are able to represent our constituents as to how they feel and what they want us to do. A lot of the people in my riding are not happy with going forward with the date of April 30, but as my colleagues indicated earlier, that is the only date on the bill. The bill says very little. It has three lines. It would not achieve anything except to possibly allow the government to continue its wedge politics, which is dividing communities in saying that they are with them or they are not with them, even though their concerns are very legitimate as we move forward.

Most people who are concerned are saying that this is a day of sadness. It is like Remembrance Day for us here in Canada. It is not a day to celebrate all of the great things that the Vietnamese community has done and has worked for.

The Vietnamese community in Canada is made up of people who are fiercely and rightly proud of their history. They work hard and in many cases continue to fight for the true freedom and democracy in their homeland. I attended the human rights subcommittee yesterday and heard the head of the Viet Tan organization talk about the atrocities that continue to happen in Vietnam. They talk about human rights violations. They talk about the amount of human trafficking going on in those communities. Those are issues that we need to be pushing forward and moving along, to ensure that we are helping a community that we very much respect in a tribute. However, is April 30 the right day?

I would prefer the bill to have been sent back to committee and have allocated more time to hearing from more witnesses on all sides of the issue, and do what we are supposed to do in Parliament on issues like this, which is to find a way to bring the community together to unite it. I have no doubt we could have done that, but unfortunately because there was insufficient time, that did not happen.

April 30 is widely seen by the Vietnamese Canadian community as a dark day, like November 11, Remembrance Day, is for us. I would like to have a day to celebrate the Vietnamese community and the wonderful work that the people continue to do to build and strengthen our community, and help us continue the positive things we are doing.

We are going forward with the difficulties of legislation that is tearing apart the community on all sides. I would like to have gone back, if that were an option, but the procedures may not allow that to happen at this particular point. As we move forward and see what else we can do to assist here to take away the difficulties between the two sides of this issue, as to how we get them all to agree, that is going to be difficult to do. I am not sure where we would have to go from here to make any corrections. For the bill to go forward in its current form is a disservice to the Vietnamese community and leads us into a difficult position.

Private Members' Business

● (1855)

However, this is a private member's bill and we will all have our opportunity to reflect our community's wishes at the time it comes up for disposition.

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to rejoin the debate on Bill S-219, the journey to freedom day act, and to speak in support of the proposed legislation.

As members know, the journey to freedom day act would designate April 30 to mark the day that began the flight of hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese in a mass exodus from their homeland. April 30 is the right day to be designated to commemorate the beginning of that exodus. I respectfully disagree with my colleague, the member for York West, and before her, the NDP member for Brossard—La Prairie, in the use of the word “divided” to describe the sentiment of the Vietnamese Canadian community.

On Saturday night I attended a very large celebration banquet in Toronto, which was attended by between 600 to 800 Vietnamese Canadians. The evening was titled “Thank You Canada”. This represents the majority faction of Vietnamese Canadians who support this bill and recognize that April 30 was indeed a tragic day. It marks the communist capture of the South Vietnamese capital after decades of civil war in the country. The final capture of Saigon really was the end of the 1954 Geneva peace accord, which divided the country in hopes that there would one day be reconciliation, but instead, we saw the domination and oppression that followed with the North Vietnamese regime.

For me, April 30 is of particular importance. I was among the 7,000 who were airlifted out of Saigon on April 30 by the American military Operation Frequent Wind. The overwhelming majority of those 7,000 were Vietnamese who had reason to fear for their lives and the lives of their families. They were lucky to have joined that final airlift as the American embassy in the centre of Saigon was abandoned. However, even as we left from the embassy, we could see people gathering at the riverside boarding all types of tramp steamers and smaller boats. They began immediately to flee for their lives. They were the first of hundreds of thousands over the next half decade who would leave their homeland in desperation, seeking new lives abroad.

There were 840,000 souls who fled Vietnam in the mid to late 1970s following the fall of Saigon seeking refuge and new homes. In her Governor General's award-winning novel *Ru*, members may recall Kim Thy describing in vivid detail the experience of these Vietnamese refugees escaping by boat to an uncertain future, something she herself had done as a child. I will read briefly from her writing:

Heaven and hell embraced in the belly of our boat. Heaven promised a turning point in our lives, a new future, a new history. Hell, though, displayed our fears: fears of pirates, fear of starvation, fear of poisoning by biscuits soaked in motor oil, fear of running out of water, fear of being unable to stand up, fear of having to urinate in the red pot that was passed from hand to hand, fear that the scabies on the baby's head was contagious, fear of never again setting foot on solid ground, fear of never again seeing the faces of our parents, who were sitting in the darkness surrounded by two hundred people.

● (1900)

Miss Thy continues:

Before our boat had weighed anchor in the middle of the night on the shores of Rach Gia, most of the passengers had just one fear: fear of the Communists, the reason for their flight. But as soon as the vessel was surrounded, encircled by the uniform blue horizon, fear was transformed into a hundred-faced monster who sawed off our legs and kept us from feeling the stiffness in our immobilized muscles.

The reality is that 250,000 people would not survive the difficult sea journey. They fell victim to illness, piracy, and dangerous seas. Those who did survive made their way to refugee camps in neighbouring countries, such as Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines, Singapore and Hong Kong, which created a massive humanitarian crisis. This crisis required action on the global scale and the world responded.

With the aid of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, government officials began the process of resettling the refugees in a number of countries, including the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Australia, the United States and, yes, Canada. Of those who survived the perilous sea voyage, more than 60,000 were welcomed by Canada. Approximately 34,000 were privately sponsored, and 26,000 were assisted by the Government of Canada.

These people, these refugees, became known as the boat people. They were welcomed with open arms by communities and religious congregations. Canadians helped these newest arrivals in Canada to find jobs, to make lives for themselves, and to educate their children and grandchildren. In fact, the outpouring of support here in Canada was so strong that the private sponsorship of refugees program became enshrined as a fundamental part of Canada's refugee resettlement program. It is a program whose strength is still recognized around the world.

Today, there are over 220,000 Canadians of Vietnamese origin. They contribute to all aspects of Canadian life: culture, sport, the economy, and academia. We value these contributions. Canada must continue to acknowledge what the Vietnamese refugees of the 1970s experienced to get here.

We must remember that April 30, 1975 was the trigger. The final capture of the South Vietnamese capital by the communist North Vietnamese was the beginning. While there is sadness to be commemorated, and it is commemorated every year on April 30, there is joy and celebration within the South Vietnamese community at the new life that they found here in Canada. I have seen it regularly on the anniversary.

As a result of Canada's efforts in assisting the boat people, members will remember that the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees awarded the people of Canada the Nansen medal in 1986. The only time in history that an entire country has received such recognition.

To this day, Canada has one of the fairest and generous immigration and refugee systems in the world. In fact, we welcome more resettled refugees than almost any other industrialized country in the world. On a per capita basis, Canada leads the way.

Private Members' Business

In conclusion, the designation of April 30 as journey to freedom day would be a significant day for all Canadians, not just the Vietnamese Canadian community. It would also be a fitting way to mark the eve of Asian Heritage Month, which we celebrate every year in May. With the passage of the bill, April 30 would be a special day of commemoration for the Vietnamese Canadian community. All Canadians deserve a day to remember with pride their considerable efforts to show the world that we are a caring and truly compassionate nation.

• (1905)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to address what I think is a very important issue. There is no doubt that it bridges political parties in the chamber as we reflect on Canada's great diversity. The leader of the Liberal Party has often said that one of Canada's greatest strengths is in fact its diversity. This is something we can all be very proud of. We can look, for example, at the issues surrounding the principle of multiculturalism, something which Pierre Trudeau established a number of years back and has instilled a great sense of pride in all of us. It does not matter which region of the country we live in.

I can talk about a great Canadian I know and had the honour to present a medal to, and that is Ba Van Nguyen, who is someone I have known for many years. In fact, when I was first elected to the Manitoba legislature in 1988, one of the very first events I was invited to back then was at the Saigon Centre, which is a wonderful, beautiful housing complex in the heart of Winnipeg. That was the first time I had the opportunity to meet Ba.

Through the years, the education and information that Ba has provided me with regard to the historical perspective of Vietnam and in particular the Vietnamese heritage here in Canada is of great value. Ba, and I suspect along with many others but I want to single out Ba, has done a tremendous job of sharing his heritage not only with individuals such as myself but with literally hundreds, if not thousands, of people over the years.

The Saigon housing complex will often have special events, where I will see other politicians as well as members of the public in attendance. They recognize the important role the Saigon Centre plays. Throughout the years, it has created such as positive hub of activity. In fact, just down the street, literally steps away from the Saigon Centre, is a park that is dedicated to the boat people.

If one were to talk to Ba, one would find that he would be prepared to share his story. He, too, had the misfortune of having to get on a boat and travel to the Philippines, and ultimately he came here to reside in Canada. I look at Ba as an individual who has contributed so much to our society. In fact, he ran in a provincial election for a different political party than I belonged to. He has demanded a great deal of respect, not because he stands on a pedestal and requires it, but because he demonstrates through leadership. He has a great sense of pride. He is a proud Canadian and has a great deal of pride in his Vietnamese heritage.

I look at the bill before us and what it would really do. What I would suggest to members of the House it would do is it would say that we need to cherish the Vietnamese heritage and a big part of that heritage are the boats that ultimately brought the refugees to Canada. By designating a day, we would be affording individuals the

opportunity, whether they are of Vietnamese heritage or not, to recognize the contributions and reflect on the history of the Vietnamese community and the positive impact it has had on the broader community.

• (1910)

The potential has been realized in many different ways in the province and the city I call home, Winnipeg, in terms of the social and economic well-being of our communities and the manner in which our Canadian Vietnamese constituents and others have really contributed to our economy and to our social fabric.

We can see that in many different ways, including in our health and manufacturing industries and in politics. The community has really built up, as have other communities. I started talking about diversity and our multicultural fabric. There is a very good sense of just how a community has done so exceptionally well in a relatively short period of time.

This last summer I had the privilege of travelling with my daughter to Vietnam. What a wonderful experience that was, just being able to experience first-hand a culture and heritage that many of the constituents I represent inside this House today can really identify with, the country of Vietnam.

When I look at the bill that we have before us today, I reflect on the importance of the issue at hand and on instilling the sense of pride that we should all have in terms of our Vietnamese community and how well it has done and how well it has overcome, over the last number of years, many different barriers.

Through experiences and talking with members from the Vietnamese community, I know they want to be able to see even more, in terms of contributions and preservation of the heritage. There were discussions about looking at how we could have street improvements, and looking at parks to see how they could reflect how Canada's heritage has actually been enriched by our Vietnamese community.

In second reading, I listened to the debate and I had the opportunity to participate. I listened to many speeches in regard to the value of recognizing a day. I appreciate all the individuals who have taken the time to stand in their place and share with the House some reflections on a very important community.

I look forward to the bill ultimately moving forward.

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

Some hon. members: Question.

The Deputy Speaker: The question is on Motion No. 3. 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.

Adjournment Proceedings

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

I declare Motion No. 3 defeated.

(Motion No. 3 negatived)

• (1915)

Mr. Mark Adler (York Centre, CPC) moved that Bill S-219, an act respecting a national day of commemoration of the exodus of Vietnamese refugees and their acceptance in Canada after the fall of Saigon and the end of the Vietnam War, be concurred in.

(Motion agreed to)

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

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

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

* * *

[*English*]

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we only have to go back to 2013 to remember what a worst case scenario for derailment looks like, but even in the aftermath of the tragedy in Lac-Mégantic, we are still wondering whether the government has a real understanding of the importance of rail safety, especially in rural areas.

Events this winter in northern Ontario suggest there is still work to be done on that front. Proof of that came in February when trains went off the rails on three separate occasions in a matter of weeks. In the worst of these instances, an incident near Gogama, 29 cars derailed, some of which caught fire, and it took six days to extinguish.

In addition to that, a million litres of crude oil was released into a pristine watershed that the Mattagami First Nation had just stocked with walleye in order to entice tourists to the region. I have to advise that there is a ripple effect because it also affected the VIA passenger train by preventing it from going on to its regular schedule, which means that there is an economic impact on communities such as Hornepayne, where the stops are usually made.

One of the key takeaway items from the event that occurred was proof that the new standards put in place in 2014 for tank cars are still inadequate. In fact, the Transportation Safety Board of Canada is

urging Transport Canada to quickly introduce enhanced protection standards for more robust cars.

The frequency of derailments has come after years of deregulation and a huge increase in the use of rail to transport crude oil. To put this into perspective, in 2009, 500 carloads of crude oil were moved by rail in Canada. By 2013, that number had ballooned to 160,000 carloads and is expected to jump to 510,000 carloads by 2016.

No matter how one views it, that is a staggering rate of growth for the transport of one commodity and the corresponding increase in demand for tanker cars capable of safely moving this volatile product. Add to those factors questions about the suitability of tracks being used to transport these extremely heavy loads. That was among the items highlighted in an interim report on the more severe Gogama area train derailment from the Transportation Safety Board. It suggests that the sheer weight of trains carrying oil has a higher than normal impact on tracks, which may have been a factor in that derailment.

We would not be covering our bases in this debate if we do not address the way that deregulation has left us with fewer tools to ensure that public safety is a priority. Before the floodgates of deregulation opened in 1999, federal inspectors had direct oversight of safety management and enforcement.

Now the job is done by in-house safety inspectors and the federal role has been limited to enforcing the Railway Act, reviewing corporate documents on safety, and data analysis. In the past, Transport Canada inspectors would make regular and unannounced inspections. Today, those same inspectors are merely verifying reports.

Now, it takes a complaint about unsafe conditions or violations before an inspector gets involved. The practice has gone from ensuring that rail is safe to letting the companies tell us it is safe. However, the time has come to stem the tide and inject some sense into the rail safety process.

Without action, we are ensuring there will be more Mattagami River type events. Without a more responsive plan, we are risking another event as horrible and avoidable as the Lac-Mégantic tragedy.

My question is simple. Will the government put effective standards in place and when will that happen?

• (1920)

Mr. Jeff Watson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government is and will continue to take actions to protect public safety while dangerous goods are being transported. This government has demonstrated it in the actions we take every day to enhance public safety. We remain committed to finding the appropriate solutions to enhance the rail system and regain the confidence of Canadians in the safe transport of dangerous goods, particularly in the wake of recent derailments, such as that which took place at Gogama, Ontario on March 7.

Adjournment Proceedings

Transport Canada has been deeply involved in work to improve the safe transportation of dangerous goods by tank car. Actions to date include: first, issuing a protective direction requiring the removal of the least crash resistant DOT-111 tank cars from dangerous goods service in Canada; second, issuing a protective direction to require emergency response assistance plans for certain flammable liquids and this requirement has since been regulated under the transportation of dangerous goods regulations; third, requiring railway companies to reduce the speed of trains carrying dangerous goods and implement other key operating practices to help improve safety; and fourth, creating an emergency response task force to bring stakeholders such as municipalities, first responders, railways and shippers together to review and strengthen emergency response capacity across the country, for instance, involving flammable liquid transported by rail.

The Transportation Safety Board has noted that not enough was known about the properties of the cargo carried on the train that exploded in Lac-Mégantic. As a result, Transport Canada is conducting research into the properties, behaviour and hazards of crude oil. The results are expected in the spring of this year.

Transport Canada continues to take actions based on a holistic risk-based approach, one that includes new train operation requirements, new compensation and liability requirements, increased inspections, among many others. As for an enhanced flammable liquid tank car standard, this government is in the final stages of developing, in collaboration with our American counterparts, the next generation of tank car for the transportation of flammable liquids, which, as part of a holistic approach, will reduce the risk of leaks in the event of a derailment.

Transport Canada has developed this new proposed tank car design, TC-117, to replace the current DOT-111 and CPC-1232 tank cars for the transport of flammable liquids by rail such as those involved in the recent Gogama derailment.

This new class of tank car would be the most robust tank car design for flammable liquid transport. In addition, the department has drafted retrofit requirements to meet the minister's direction on the phase-out refit schedule for the legacy DOT-111 tank cars announced on April 23, 2014. Transport Canada intends to publish the tank car standard this spring.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Carol Hughes: Mr. Speaker, the facts are easy enough to understand.

The Transportation Safety Board of Canada says that the new standards adopted in 2014 for DOT-111 tank cars are inadequate for the transportation of crude oil. It says that these tank cars are simply not safe enough and has asked Transport Canada to adopt stricter standards to prevent another tragedy.

In addition, there are still a number of other important questions about whether railways are appropriate for the transportation of volatile substances, such as crude oil, and about whether deregulation and self-monitoring really work.

[*English*]

All of this is taking place as the movement of crude oil by rail is increasing at a dramatic rate. Lac-Mégantic was a worst case

scenario, but the damage done in derailments like we saw in the Mattagami River cannot be viewed as anything less than a failure either. The system that is meant to protect Canadians is doing more to protect the rail system that is increasingly marked by incidents.

When will the government turn the tide on this problem and put effective standards in place?

● (1925)

Mr. Jeff Watson: The member is not listening, Mr. Speaker. The government is putting in place a number of tough standards. She should update her statistics, by the way. I know she stopped at 2013, but oil by rail is actually significantly down, though it is still the government's responsibility. Should the economy pick up, we want oil by rail to continue to be safe. That is why we take actions.

There is no deregulation in our country. There are tough regulations. There are also operating rules that have the force of regulations because they are approved by Transport Canada. Therefore, we expect that rail companies should operate safely, that is the first thing. That is why they have to conduct inspections themselves, look at their equipment, but we check their homework. The number of inspectors are up as are the number of Transport Canada TDG inspectors. The number of inspections are at record levels over the last three years, some 30,000-plus inspections each and every year.

We are taking strong action. The member opposite should support that.

* * *

[*Translation*]

EMPLOYMENT

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on December 5, I asked a question that is very important to me because it has to do with something that has been the focus of my entire professional life, and that is women's rights. However, as has been the case a number of times when I have asked this government a question, I was not impressed with the answer.

Nonetheless, I am glad that we are having a debate on the employability of women in Canada as we assess the new budget.

Since the beginning of my mandate, I have been meeting with the people of Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, and I have always listened to their concerns. What they tell me is very clear and echoes what we are hearing throughout the province and across the country, from coast to coast. Middle-class families are suffering; household debt has never been higher; there has been a series of significant layoffs in the country; the price of food is skyrocketing; and there is a serious shortage of child care spaces.

Adjournment Proceedings

In yesterday's budget speech, the Minister of Finance was talking about the opportunity for Canadians to work hard, dream big and make their dreams come true. However, families are not going to be able to do any of that under this government.

The NDP submitted a number of recommendations to the Conservative government for the budget, and many of them were unfortunately left out. The Conservatives like to steal the NDP's good ideas when it comes to the economy. However, they forgot about the ones that have to do with child care.

In 2006, however, the Prime Minister promised to create 125,000 new child care spaces. My question is simple: where are those spaces?

After nine years of waiting, we can say that the Prime Minister did not honour his commitments to Canadian families. Let us come back to what the Minister of Finance said about the importance of dreaming big and achieving those dreams. In the NDP's view, families will be able to do that when every child has a space in child care for which parents pay no more than \$15 a day.

The statistics are clear: affordable child care helps families and stimulates the economy. In Quebec, 70,000 more women have been working since affordable child care was introduced. Furthermore, our economy grows by \$2 for every dollar invested in child care. We cannot afford to lose our workforce because of a lack of child care spaces.

Some mothers and fathers will be forced to quit their jobs or their studies for these reasons. Too many women are putting their careers on hold because they cannot find affordable child care in this country. At this time, 900,000 children do not have access to affordable child care. That means 900,000 families are suffering because of this situation.

Child care costs are sometimes too much for families to bear, since they can run to more \$2,000 a month. How are families supposed to pay the rent and pay for their car on top of that? How are they supposed to pay off their student loans and their mortgage? How are they supposed to have any purchasing power to stimulate the economy?

• (1930)

[English]

Mr. Jeff Watson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our approach is pragmatic and clear. Instead of simply talking about Canadian families and children, we are acting to support them. Our approach is to trust the real experts on families in this country. They are moms and dads. After all, are parents not the best at identifying their own family's needs, especially when it comes to child care? Let me provide some examples of the kinds of actions we are taking to support Canadian families and children.

Last fall we announced a major enhancement to the universal child care benefit. Yesterday we demonstrated that commitment to Canadian families. With this change, Canadian families will now receive close to \$2,000 per year for each child under the age of six. On top of that, we introduced a new benefit of \$720 per year for children ages six through seventeen. This is not just frivolous talk; this is concrete action in support of Canadian moms and dads.

Thanks to these measures, more than four million Canadian families will now benefit from the universal child care benefit.

Our government wants all Canadian families to succeed. That is why since 2006 we have reduced the GST from 7% to 5%, introduced the tax-free savings account, and as announced yesterday, we will double it. We have introduced the children's fitness tax credit, and so many more.

Further to these benefits we have provided to Canadian families, we provided even more help yesterday with the tabling of budget 2015. We have proposed a \$1,000 increase in the maximum that can be claimed under the child care expense deduction, introduced the family tax cut that will provide up to \$2,000 in tax relief to families with children under the age of 18, and doubled the children's fitness tax credit to \$1,000.

Maybe I should remind my hon. colleague of the disability tax credit that is available to parents of children who are disabled to help them reduce the amount of income tax they may have to pay.

Moreover, the children's fitness tax credit and the children's art tax credit now allow parents to claim a tax credit to further help families.

Let us not forget about the Canada education savings program, which encourages families to start saving early for their children's education.

Last but certainly not least, we now provide over \$1.2 billion a year to provinces and territories for early childhood development and early learning and child care through the Canada social transfer. Altogether, we are currently investing over \$6.5 billion in support of childhood development, early learning and child care through transfers to the provinces and territories, direct spending, and tax measures for families.

We are talking about the largest investment of this kind in our country's history. I am proud of what our government is doing to respond to the needs of all Canadian children and families.

[Translation]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Minister of Finance forgot to explain to the House that the \$720 for teenagers is taxable, as are the amounts it is giving for young children. What will be left once families pay their taxes? This means that half of that money, more than 30%, will go back to the government and be taken away from these families again.

Nine years ago, the Prime Minister also promised to foster work-life balance. That was more wishful thinking and a white lie. Consequently, parents of preschool children are having difficulty achieving work-life balance, which is costing Canadian companies billions of dollars a year and hurting our economy. However, there was nothing about work-life balance in yesterday's budget.

Adjournment Proceedings

Furthermore, when it comes to women's entrepreneurship, one thing is very clear: more men than women run their own companies, in all age groups. It is important to invest in women's entrepreneurship, but without child care, women will not succeed.

[*English*]

Mr. Jeff Watson: Mr. Speaker, the choice is crystal clear. We have the official opposition who would raise taxes dramatically and would direct that money to expensive bureaucracy for child care for only less than 10% of Canadian families. By contrast, our government's approach is simple. It is lowering taxes, providing benefits that go directly to parents of up to \$2,000 for children up to age six and \$720 per child for children ages six to seventeen, and offering a direct child care choice to 100% of Canadian families.

That is a record we are proud of and one that we know Canadians would prefer over that of the opposition.

• (1935)

[*Translation*]

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is very simple: will the government support a legislative framework for VIA Rail?

VIA Rail has been a crown corporation since it was created in 1977. It was created as a crown corporation because passenger rail is an essential public service and one that has the potential to generate significant economic, social and cultural benefits, especially for rural regions.

Our country was built on railroads, yet successive governments have left VIA Rail adrift, without a mandate and without a clear delineation of its rights, powers or obligations. Look where that has gotten us. Routes are in jeopardy or have been cut, service has been reduced and schedules are unreliable.

In the meantime, Amtrak in the United States is flourishing. A rail transportation network covers the United States with the help of passenger trains built in Canada by Bombardier, among others, some of which can reach speeds of up to 200 kilometres an hour. True, Amtrak's budget is three or four times bigger than VIA Rail's, but it serves nearly 10 times more passengers.

The difference is that Amtrak's role and mandate are clearly defined in the legislative framework. The difference is that in Canada, since 2007, the federal government has sunk over \$900 million into VIA Rail. The government invested \$900 million of taxpayers' money without addressing the fundamental problems. We have had enough of temporary solutions. Is the government now prepared to roll up its sleeves and do what needs to be done?

The fact that VIA Rail has been able to survive for such a long time without a legislative mandate does not mean that the status quo can be maintained indefinitely. It simply shows that the concept of passenger rail is a solid one. According to the U.S. Department of Commerce, every dollar spent on passenger rail service generates three to four times that amount in economic returns. American politicians from all parties understand that the issue is not whether

they can afford to invest in passenger services but whether they can afford not to.

It is time for the government to stop wasting taxpayers' money on temporary solutions and start investing in a reliable crown corporation. Let us start by clearly establishing what we expect from VIA Rail in return for its public funding.

A legislative framework for VIA Rail would serve as a charter of rights for passenger trains. It is time to give VIA Rail the tools it needs to provide Canadians with a national public passenger rail service that is reliable, safe, effective and worthy of 21st-century Canada.

[*English*]

Mr. Jeff Watson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the government has said on many occasions, it is important to recognize that VIA Rail is an independent Crown corporation. That means that the government does not operate the railway, nor does it get involved in its day-to-day operations.

VIA Rail is responsible for making business decisions about its operations, including the best way to meet its objective of operating a safe and efficient national rail system, while lowering its costs to reduce its reliance on federal taxpayers. Introducing a bill, as the member opposite did, that dictates the service frequency of certain routes or requires a lengthy approval process for VIA to adjust its route network would only increase VIA's costs and make the service unresponsive to changing needs.

VIA Rail continuously assesses its markets and operations to decide how to best provide the most economically efficient service to passengers. Every day, VIA reviews its prices to match the number of seats offered on its schedules to the expected demand for its services. In many of VIA's markets, customers have choices. Often, they can also choose to fly, drive, or take a bus. As one would expect, if VIA operates inefficiently, customers will either move to alternatives or not travel. This direct link between service and passenger volumes keeps VIA's feet to the fire and explains why it is good business for VIA to ensure that it operates both safely and efficiently.

Intercity passenger services are an important component of our transportation system that benefit our economy and our society as they connect Canadians from coast to coast. Recognizing this, despite VIA's efforts to achieve efficiencies, our government still provides VIA with annual subsidies to support its services. The government provided VIA with \$305 million in 2013-14, a significant amount of funding, to operate and maintain its network. In addition, our government continues to make unprecedented capital investments in VIA to allow it to make important improvements to modernize its operations. These, by the way, are measures that were opposed by the party opposite.

Adjournment Proceedings

The government has made available more than \$1 billion in capital funding over the past seven years to upgrade and modernize portions of its rail network and many of its railcars. The government's role is to support an environment that allows VIA to succeed by providing the business conditions and the freedom to make commercial choices, and by providing the necessary funding to allow it to invest in the equipment and infrastructure it needs to operate.

• (1940)

Mr. Philip Toone: Mr. Speaker, I will start with the last point. It is very clear that if VIA Rail were to invest in new rolling stock, it would improve its efficiency substantially. It currently uses what they call "renaissance cars" to travel on the eastern side of this country. These cars were not designed for northern climates such as ours. They were designed to cross the Channel in Europe. The doors are frequently frozen in the wintertime and unable to open. The cars are not adapted to the rail that we have.

Were we to have rolling stock that was performing properly in our conditions, we could build them in La Pocatière, Quebec. We could build them in Thunder Bay, Ontario. The multiplication factor of that kind of investment would be enormous for those regions. VIA Rail could be an economic tool and a motor for the economies of many regions in this country, and the government is slowly starving VIA out.

We need more investment. We need reliable investment, and this is why we need a legislative framework. The Conservative government, unfortunately, does not seem to understand that passenger rail is essential in this country.

Mr. Jeff Watson: Mr. Speaker, it is quite the opposite. We do, in fact, recognize the importance of passenger rail in this country. That is why our government has been supporting VIA Rail substantially, not only in the operations of its network, but with important capital investments over the last seven years. There has been over \$1 billion in capital investments.

I know that the opposition likes to talk about VIA Rail, but at the end of the day, whether it is in the estimates that come before the House or committees, or whether it is in the budgets that we set aside, every single time we move to make an investment in VIA Rail, the opposition votes against it. It is time for the opposition to do more than talk about support and start showing that it can stand on its feet and vote in favour of support for VIA Rail for a change.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:44 p.m.)

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