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(HANSARD)

Tuesday, January 26, 2016

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, January 26, 2016

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[*English*]

ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The Speaker: I have the honour to lay upon the table, pursuant to subsection 23(5) of the Auditor General Act, the fall 2015 reports of the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development to the House of Commons. These reports are permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development.

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PETITIONS

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to present two petitions. The first is from residents throughout British Columbia, primarily in Armstrong and Vernon, who call on the House to take action for electoral reform. The petitioners point out that the current first-past-the-post voting system is one that is anti-democratic, and they call for electoral reform, a call that is resonated in the Speech from the Throne.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition comes from residents throughout the area of my riding, primarily Salt Spring Island, although I do see that some petitioners are from as far away as Vancouver and White Rock, who call on the House to adopt a carbon policy that will allow greenhouse gas levels to be held to those levels that will avoid disasters and catastrophic levels of climate crisis.

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QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

[*English*]

RESUMPTION OF DEBATE ON ADDRESS IN REPLY

The House resumed from January 25 consideration of the motion for an address to His Excellency the Governor General in reply to his speech at the opening of the session.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour to respond to the Speech from the Throne on behalf of the citizens of the new riding of Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola. I would like to inform you that I will be sharing my time with the great member for Thornhill.

Time is valuable in this place and, thus, I will get directly to adding a few comments that are of great concern to my riding.

The largest single void in the Speech from the Throne is that there is zero mention of the need to prioritize a new Canada-United States softwood lumber agreement.

Let me provide pause, for a moment.

In Princeton, British Columbia, over the past few decades, a lumber mill has been the single largest private employer in that community. The same goes for Merritt, British Columbia, where there are a number of lumber mills. I also have to say it is the same situation in my home community of West Kelowna.

These mills drive local economies. Make no mistake, for every lumber mill, there are many spinoff jobs and small businesses that also depend upon the health of the B.C. forestry sector.

It is not just softwood lumber and the forestry industry on which the throne speech is silent. There is also no mention of mining.

In Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, we are fortunate to have two major mining operations that provide hundreds of well-paying resource jobs.

Right now, the mining sector is very nervous, as our Prime Minister recently slighted our former prime minister in Davos over the very subject of natural resources.

The Address

I am here to tell members, clearly, that natural resources and resource development are not dirty words. They may not fit into the new Prime Minister's narrative of sunny ways and selfies, but make no mistake, communities in my riding very much depend upon these well-paying jobs.

The Prime Minister should also know that the people who work in this industry are extremely resourceful, but they are also extremely technologically dependent. In fact, Canada is known to be the leader in the development and utilization of robotic mining. The mining sector itself is second only to the federal government in its use of computers in Canada. These are things that I think people should know.

Innovation drives the forestry sector because it is so dependent upon productivity. In fact, robotics and new methods of global positioning and satellite work are constantly being used to make that sector more productive.

To imply that resourcefulness is not involved in getting Canadian resources to international markets is an insult to those who work so hard to make our economies grow.

My other major concern in the Speech from Throne is the lack of clarity around infrastructure.

The throne speech references transit spending, social infrastructure, and green infrastructure, but it is largely silent on civic infrastructure.

Let me explain why this lack of clarity is a major concern, not just in my riding but throughout many parts of British Columbia.

The Prime Minister named only three members from British Columbia to his cabinet; however, none of these three has been named as the lead British Columbia regional minister. This creates challenges for municipalities—more so for municipalities located outside the Lower Mainland—as these Liberal ministers all represent ridings within a short distance of one another.

I have concerns on the throne speech, but the final point I will raise is that it is also completely silent on the subject of pipelines.

Why is that a concern? As an example, the Trans Mountain pipeline will generate \$13 million annually in tax revenue for the regional district of Thompson-Nicola. Merritt alone, which currently collects \$150,000 from the existing Trans Mountain pipeline, would see that increase to \$250,000 a year, as a result of the expansion.

They are huge sums of revenue for small local governments, but to mention an estimated \$419 million in pipeline-related construction just around Merritt and area and other communities.

Let us be clear. The Trans Mountain pipeline was first built in 1953. It does need to be replaced, and twinning is a cost-effective solution that would help communities in my riding.

•(1010)

However, the Trans Mountain project is not the only one missing from the throne speech. There is another kind of pipeline proposed for B.C., and that involves British Columbia liquid natural gas, or LNG.

B.C. LNG proposes billions of dollars of new investment for British Columbia. We should not overlook the good work of the B.C. government in signing roughly 61 agreements with 28 different first nation communities along the proposed LNG pipeline route.

Does the Liberal government support this critically important project? We have no idea. The throne speech was completely silent on these private-sector projects. Billions of dollars of investment is proposed for these projects at a time when jobs and investment are needed, and there is no mention of them in the throne speech.

Does everyone agree on these projects? No, but has there ever been a major project in any province at any time that does not draw naysayers? Absolutely, there has not. That is the final point on the throne speech that I will leave for this place.

For those who have been in government before—maybe they have served as a local councillor or as a mayor; maybe they have served as a cabinet minister in a provincial government—eventually, they all know that difficult decisions need to be made. Timelines are required. Processes need to have transparency as well as certainty. This is what attracts investment, creates jobs, and completes projects.

Naysayers and social licence did not create this country. Those things did not build Canada. It was hard work, investment, vision, and leadership from those who were not afraid to make those difficult decisions to build a bigger, stronger country. This is the vision my constituents were looking for in the throne speech. I might also add that these concerns are not only missing from this document, but many of the things I have mentioned today are also not mentioned in mandate letters, which is troubling and somewhat alarming to me.

In fact, as an example, we will take the important subject of interprovincial trade. Our Prime Minister has given himself the role of minister of intergovernmental affairs. However, where is his mandate letter for the minister of intergovernmental affairs? It is missing. What kind of message does that send?

There are many other concerns I would like to raise. However, I have summarized my comments today to illustrate some key concerns as they relate to my riding, to my province, and to things I would like to see as a proud Canadian. I would like to thank all members of this place for taking the time to hear my concerns today. I look forward to working with all of them together to build that Canada on which I know many of my constituents would agree we need to work together.

Ms. Kim Rudd (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I listened to the member opposite, it was hard to know where to begin to correct some of the misinformation. I will start with the mandate letters.

The Minister of Natural Resources has been very clear, particularly yesterday in this House when he took a lot of questions, and responded to them, around some of the things that the Minister of Natural Resources is going forward on. On the modernization of the NEB, the minister is going coast to coast to coast to talk to stakeholders.

The Address

One of the terms I heard was that naysayers and social licence are not what this country was built on. Collaboration is something this country was built on, and I would suggest that our position, our intent, and what we are demonstrating is that we are not going to discount naysayers. In fact, we are going to invite them to the table. We are going to try to bring them to understand the perspectives of lots of other people, and that is the only way we will move these projects forward.

We have said clearly that the modernization of the NEB will happen, as the minister said yesterday, as well as ensuring that we have an interim process for those plans already in process. The only way it will happen is if Canadians can trust that, as a government, we are making sure they are taken care of.

•(1015)

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my hon. colleague's comments. However, they seem to be a mini-speech of their own.

I would simply say, first of all, that all the items I raised were not in the Speech from the Throne. That is the perspective I was giving. Second, if it takes the official opposition to ask questions of a minister as to what direction his government plans to take on important private sector natural resource developments, something that this country is known for, that is a reactive position. That is the wrong position, and I think the member should acknowledge that.

Third, I am raising concerns that are important to people. The high-paying jobs I have talked about are what put food on the table for many families in my area. Consensus building is what leaders do. I appreciated what the Prime Minister did this morning with the mayor of Montreal, but we need to see more of this.

When I was at the Natural Resources Forum in Prince George, British Columbia, last week, I heard two words, "vague" and "uncertain". That is how the industry feels about the current government. It could do a lot more to drive consensus and certainty to bring the investment this country deserves.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from British Columbia for his passion and his remarks here today in debate. I was struck by a particular section of his speech where he talked about the vision previous governments have had to build a better country together. He talked about vision, but the new government seems to be based on division. In his speech in Davos, the Prime Minister was flippant about the role the resource economy plays in Canada. From B.C., with forestry and mining, to oil and gas throughout the country, to potash, these resources help fuel the programs Canadians enjoy. To mock or play off one sector against another is not leadership.

The other thing we see is division between provinces. The seed is already being sown. The Prime Minister had to go to Montreal this morning to ask his former parliamentary colleague, Denis Coderre, to stop halting the progress and opportunity for New Brunswick and for western Canada.

Could the hon. member please talk about the role vision plays, having all industries play a role, from B.C. to Newfoundland, in our economic success?

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Speaker, I would just point this out. I was a little disappointed, as I am sure many people were. The Prime

Minister said that he would try to unite Canadians. I appreciate that a prime minister, as a leader, should take to the world stage to encourage and influence world opinion but should not actually take a cheap jab at his predecessor on that world stage. A prime minister here should be using that to put forward a position that all Canadians can get behind.

There is a burgeoning tech sector in Kelowna. We see how technology has brought innovation to the forestry sector and made it more productive. I think the Prime Minister should acknowledge that those things are happening. I believe the vision he is talking about is something that can happen, but not, again, if we continue to see from the Prime Minister more division, more splitting, and not coming together as a country.

•(1020)

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to rise today as we continue debate on the Speech from the Throne.

Given that Her Majesty's loyal opposition hopes that the Prime Minister and his cabinet have received adequate briefings over the past two months to reconsider and recognize some of the promises made during the election campaign that could not or should not be kept, I will resist the temptation to say repeatedly, "We told you so", and I will offer constructive suggestions on some changes and improvements.

I would like to use my time today to touch on a number of issues referenced in generalities in the throne speech that are priorities in my riding of Thornhill and I am sure in ridings right across the country.

It has been my pleasure over the years to participate in a variety of welcoming events for refugees from Iraq and from Syria, particularly those from oppressed minorities in those two broken states. I have been impressed, I have been inspired, by these newest members of Canadian society as they have embraced humble initial accommodation and have welcomed equally humble employment opportunities as they have begun the sometimes marathon process of learning new languages or waiting to have professional qualifications certified.

Notwithstanding Canada's traditional generosity in welcoming refugees from around the world, the government's rush to achieve targeted Syrian intake numbers has had a number of significant, although to be fair, I believe unintended, consequences. Welcoming refugees is one thing, but resettling them effectively and with care is quite another.

The Address

The original Liberal campaign promise during the bidding war in the campaign of 25,000 by year's end was clearly unrealistic. However, in the accelerated process, where almost half of the 10,000-by-January target were privately sponsored refugees, serious problems developed very quickly in the capacity of private sponsors and private sponsorship groups, such as religious organizations and community groups, to settle hundreds of new arrivals a week: finding accommodations, acquiring furniture and clothing, connecting new arrivals with schools and with services.

Privately sponsored refugees are allowed one night in hotels, then they become the responsibility of the sponsor or sponsors. On the other hand, government sponsored refugees have unlimited hotel stays, for weeks and even months, and that is not necessarily better. I am sure members have seen media reports of some government sponsored refugees held in hotels for weeks who have expressed frustration to the point that they have suggested that they would rather go home. I am sure that is only the frustration speaking, but it is something to recognize.

The government, to be fair, recognized the unexpected burden on private sponsors and implemented a pause last week, but of only five days. I have been advised by one of the more experienced private sponsors that they could actually use a pause of at least a month.

This is a non-partisan issue. There is no blame to be cast. There are no recriminations. Canadians can make this humanitarian effort work. However, adjustments must be made to manage the flow to some urban centres. In my riding of Thornhill, for example, available rental accommodation is extremely limited. In York region, we have a waiting list of affordable housing of more than 12,000.

I believe that the government should also reconsider the provision of one-night hotel accommodation to allow private sponsors and social agencies to locate, or give them greater time to locate, appropriate housing.

The second matter I would like to raise today has to do with the commitment in the throne speech "to work with Canada's allies in the fight against terrorism".

The government is still incredibly vague and incoherent in explaining its fixation on fight fade with regard to the CF-18 component of Operation IMPACT. It defies the wishes of our allies. It defies the effectiveness of the Royal Canadian Air Force. It defies logic. It defies Canadian public opinion. Now is not the time for Canada to step back, to force our allies to take heavier burdens in the fight against Daesh, ISIS.

• (1025)

Canadians have been magnificent in accepting tens of thousands of displaced victims from Syria and Iraq. However, they are the lucky few, in all honesty. That is because in the long run, the most important thing democratic peace-loving nations can deliver to the millions of suffering souls in the Levant is the restoration of peace and stability, allowing the displaced to eventually return to their devastated communities to begin to rebuild their lives in their homeland.

Finally, the government has, I believe, unrealistically optimistic intentions to establish diplomatic relations with some of the most dangerous individuals and groups around the world today. I know

that many of the hon. members opposite justify their policy positions with the simple statement "because it's 2016". Because it is 2016, I would like to suggest that it is time to put aside some of the Liberal Party's dated concepts about diplomacy, about war and peace and peacekeeping, and about the solutions needed to address global challenges today. There is certainly a place for optimism and a place for hope and sunny ways, but certainly not for wishful thinking and simplistic solutions.

When it comes to Iran, it is time for a reality check on the government's plans to ease sanctions, to normalize diplomatic relations, to reopen Canada's embassy in Tehran, to allow the Iranian mission to reopen in Ottawa, and to encourage Canadian businesses to explore business opportunities with the regime in Iran.

I was, frankly, disappointed by the indecent rush by some European nations to take advantage of trade opportunities that the lifting of sanctions against Iran's nuclear adventurism would allow. I am equally disappointed that a minister of Canada's new government would voice the same commercial justification to consider delisting Iran as a state sponsor of terrorism; reopening our Tehran embassy, putting our foreign service professionals at risk in the face of the Iranian regime's selective protection of diplomatic establishments; and attempting to engage with a regime that continues flagrant testing of ballistic missiles and that promises to spend billions of dollars in released sanctions funds to sponsor terrorist groups that are committed to the destruction of Israel.

In conclusion, I sincerely hope that our government does not allow sunny ways cockeyed optimism to put Canadians at risk or to put any potential victims of Iranian-sponsored terrorism at risk in the months and the years ahead.

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Intergovernmental Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest as we were encouraged to put aside our dated ideology and then listened to a list of deficiencies in the immigration system that are creating a challenge as we seek to settle not just 25,000 but as many Syrian refugees as possible.

I believe what I heard listed was that there is a shortage of affordable housing, in particular in the member's riding, and that there is capacity lacking in the immigrant settlement services, largely as a result of cuts the previous government made.

The Address

The same could be said for housing. The cuts and the underfunding of the housing sector by the previous government are largely why there is not a housing program to absorb not just new arrivals but Canadians who need housing. Therefore, as the member encourages us to put aside a dated ideology, which I am not sure is an entirely accurate statement, am I now hearing from the members opposite, and particularly from the Conservative caucus, that they will put aside their principled and long-stated objection to investments in public housing and subsidies for public housing residents, that they will support the investments in immigrant resettlement services, and that they will help develop a society that has the capacity now to absorb, encourage, and employ new arrivals to this country? Will they put aside their cynical ideology, which has put this country in exactly the position that he says needs to change?

Hon. Peter Kent: Mr. Speaker, I always enjoy engaging in dialogue with my colleague from Spadina—Fort York.

With regard to dated Liberal concepts of diplomacy, peace-keeping, war and peace, I think that Lester Pearson today would follow quite a different course than in the golden days of Pearsonian diplomacy when the United Nations was a very different organization and when protagonists and antagonists around the world, or warring parties, would eventually come to negotiated and reasonable settlements. We are dealing today with a new phenomenon where martyrdom is cherished over reasonable resolution and peaceful coexistence among differing groups around the world, not just in the Middle East.

With regard to housing, I would like to gently contradict my colleague opposite. During our massive and historic injection of infrastructure funding in 2009, 2010 and 2011, I had the honour and the pleasure of officiating at a number of new housing projects that were opened in downtown Toronto. With regard to York Region, we have been working collaboratively with the municipalities. They agreed that they have been negligent in the past in their city planning and bylaws in not encouraging developers who were building high-rises and condominiums to include by planning or bylaw affordable housing, rental housing, and to change the provisions of bylaws in the 12 communities of York Region which allow private homeowners to open up rental accommodations in their facilities.

There is much to be done. In providing advice following the minister's call for a response on infrastructure spending, I suggested that we should revisit the original CMHC planning, which has sadly gone off the rails in recent years. This is one way to address the housing problem in Canada today.

• (1030)

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague pointed out in his excellent speech some of the deficiencies in the Speech from the Throne. He mentioned the challenges that we are having with respect to our refugees. It is really important for a new government to have not only a good vision but also a plan forward. One of the important things with refugees is jobs. Jobs are a priority in my community of Oshawa.

There is another deficiency in the Speech from the Throne and the current government's platform and that is that there is no plan for manufacturing and no specific plan for the auto sector. When the Prime Minister was campaigning he said that he would like to transition away from manufacturing.

I would like to ask my colleague for some advice for the new government. It is great to have all of these visions but there is no concrete plan for a way forward. What is the importance of having plans for certain sectors, like great jobs in manufacturing, versus a vision with no plan?

Hon. Peter Kent: Mr. Speaker, I agree with the content of my colleague's question. I have met with the new minister responsible for regional development across the country and urged him to continue what was executed very effectively, in Ontario at least, under FedDev Ontario, in terms of funding for increased capacity in small and medium-sized enterprises and the creation of jobs.

[*Translation*]

Mr. William Amos (Pontiac, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Mount Royal. It is a great honour for me to give my first speech in the House with my parents and my wife, Regina, in attendance.

I would like to thank the people of Pontiac who gave me a strong mandate and the privilege of representing them. I promise that I will serve them with determination, energy and integrity so that they can be proud of their federal MP.

The throne speech made our Liberal government's democratic vision for a dramatic change in Canada's political identity very clear. We made a specific commitment to listen to and work with other stakeholders and jurisdictions at community, municipality and first nation levels for the benefit of our country and our region in west Quebec.

My challenge will be to represent not only the diverse voters in the suburbs of Aylmer and Gatineau, but also those in rural Pontiac, who have so often been forgotten in the greater national capital region.

Together with my three Liberal Party colleagues in the Outaouais, I will help develop a regional approach based on improving social and environmental infrastructure.

• (1035)

[*English*]

I will stand up for rural Pontiac, which has so often been forgotten by the national capital region. We are going to develop a brand that is based on our wilderness, our farms, our forests, our arts, and our indigenous communities. Our people are our most precious resource. I will listen to them. I will listen to the diversity of Canadian voices that seek to define and redefine our electoral system, that strive for equality and who seek to defend our right to a healthy environment.

Over the past few months as I criss-crossed this rural riding I had the opportunity to listen to concerns far and wide. The simple fact is, our Canadian economy is not delivering for Pontiac. It seems to most of the people I speak with out in the country that our economy is stacked in favour of those who already have the most resources and those who live in big cities.

The Address

A vision of Pontiac has emerged as I have spoken with people, from Cantley to Chelsea, westwards along Highway 148, down through Shawville, Campbell's Bay, Fort-Coulonge, all the way out to Allumette Island and Rapides des Joachims. That same vision is one I hear when I go up the 105, all the way up past Low and Kazabazua, Gracefield, Maniwaki, the whole valley of Gatineau. People want economic stability. They want jobs. My job, and the job of my colleagues in the Outaouais, is to help deliver for small businesses, bring forward this vision from our Speech from the Throne and deliver infrastructure projects and new job opportunities.

The Pontiac is a place that is steeped in history. It is a place that was first inhabited by the Anishinaabe, the Algonquin people. This is a great indigenous nation that has experienced many difficult changes. It is now time to invite reconciliation with the Anishinaabe people to address our colonial past and unceded territorial claims. I say *meegwetch* to the communities of Kitigan Zibi and Barrier Lake for working with me to achieve this reconciliation.

Since the 1600s, the Pontiac has also been home to agricultural settlers, traders, and foresters of European descent. Irish, English, and French communities live side by side in harmony. It is one of the most bilingual regions in our country. It is such a diverse community, and now it is home to some of the newest Syrian families in Canada. We are very proud of that.

Standing behind a vision of Canadian unity, the Pontiac people have had strong federalist roots for many years. So many people in the Pontiac serve our entire country working for the federal government in the civil service.

[*Translation*]

Thousands of federal civil servants are devoted to helping the federal government create a better Canada.

The Pontiac is a huge playground. We have the Coulonge falls and rafting on the Ottawa River. There is tremendous potential for a new national park. Among other attractions in our region are the Gatineau valley with its many cottages and Nordik Spa, one of the best in North America.

[*English*]

The Pontiac is a land of forests, lakes, and rivers that provides a livelihood for so many residents and abundant opportunities for recreational activities. It is a land of agriculture. It is a land of forests.

[*Translation*]

The Pontiac has a proud tradition of local producers, both small- and large-scale farmers who supply food to markets in the Outaouais, as well as Montreal and Ottawa. Our best restaurants are just 20 minutes from Ottawa. They offer a local menu, sourced from farmers in the Pontiac.

[*English*]

However, all is not well in the land of Pontiac.

[*Translation*]

Canadian society is less egalitarian than it used to be. Income disparity is increasing. Our government's throne speech clearly acknowledges that.

I am worried. Actually, I am outraged by the economic situation in the Pontiac. It is unacceptable that some areas of the Pontiac and the Haute-Gatineau have some of the highest poverty rates in the province of Quebec. Our region has been too long forgotten.

Our region's unemployment rate went up after the mills shut down. Our seniors living on fixed incomes and our young people are having a really hard time. On top of all that, there have also been massive cuts to the federal public service over the past decade, as well as to employment insurance.

● (1040)

[*English*]

Pontiac families today are stretched in so many directions, and so are their budgets. Out of pocket costs keep rising faster than wages. I hear this everywhere I go.

A single mom in Shawville talks about juggling a job and raising three kids. If only her child assistance payments were increased, it would ease that situation. Our government will be there to help.

There is the grandmother in La Pêche who works around the clock providing child care to her three grandchildren. She is proud of her work, but the pay is barely enough to pay the rent. She needs affordable senior housing. Our government will deliver.

There are the young entrepreneurs who dream of opening a small business but are hampered by substandard Internet connectivity and cell phone access. Our government will help.

All these trends are real and not going away, but they do not determine our destiny. The choices that we make for our nation and for Pontiac matter. The choices we make over the next four years will set the stage for the middle class and those who aspire to join it in western Quebec.

[*Translation*]

Our region, the Outaouais, needs a boost. That is why it voted in Liberal MPs and a government that will be able to raise employment rates, improve economic development in the region and restore respect for the public service, our workers and our seniors.

I am committed to working with the people of Pontiac so that, together, we can protect and respectfully and sustainably develop our natural resources. Our lakes, rivers, forests, and agricultural lands are the pride of our region. They unify us, serve as a source of well-being and prosperity and define who we are.

[*English*]

I would like to conclude by saying that I look forward to hosting an economic summit, bringing together all of the municipal and regional governments of our riding. I look forward to bringing together all of these small businesses and all of the communities who want to work together to build a better Pontiac.

[*Translation*]

I hope the next four years will be the best the Pontiac has ever known.

The Address

[English]

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member on a very effective maiden speech in Parliament. He is a natural politician. I think he named every town in his riding in the course of his speech. It was very well done.

There is one thing I would like the member to comment on. I listened to his remarks about how some people in Pontiac feel that cities have been getting ahead but not parts of rural Canada or suburban Canada. I said this to one of my colleagues who spoke earlier about the problem of pitting one industry and one future against another, or saying that Canada is moving past manufacturing and resources and will only rely on high tech or IT and the information economy.

Representing a riding that has a mixture of rural parts, would the member comment on how we could build a plan so that both rural Canada and urban Canada respect the various industries and move forward together?

Mr. William Amos: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for a great question, which has been asked of me many times.

Pontiac is a challenging riding because there are so many people living in Gatineau now who are represented in this riding, but also many small towns that have been decreasing in population and are looking for a new industry and a boost to their existing economies around agriculture and forestry.

[Translation]

Honestly, we need to accept the fact that we need to improve some aspects of our economy of the past, such as agriculture and forestry. We need to support those sectors and reduce interprovincial trade barriers for agricultural products. We need to develop the forestry processing sector in various ways, all across the Outaouais. We cannot overlook those aspects of our economy.

• (1045)

[English]

The reality of the situation in Pontiac is such that we need to look at both the economy of the past and the economy of the future, and marry them together. There is no one solution.

The greatest asset that we have in the Pontiac is the natural capital. We are bounded by the Ottawa and Gatineau Rivers. There are so many lakes and areas to go canoeing, fishing, and camping. Therefore, we need to build the Pontiac brand. If we can achieve a brand around wilderness, agriculture and forestry, and marry that to high tech and connectivity through the Internet, we can build small businesses that will help us succeed.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member for Pontiac on his election. We have known each other for quite some time. I can presume that the hon. member will share the concern of his former colleagues at Ecojustice for the calls and support for a transitional process for the NEB process, for the reinstatement of protections of navigable rivers, legislation that was the key driver for federal assessment, and that his members support instigating federal protections for the participation, access to information, and effective enforcement under the environmental bill of rights.

Will the member for Pontiac be an advocate for these issues, which are concerns of the public, in his caucus?

Mr. William Amos: Mr. Speaker, indeed, this is an issue that is near and dear to my heart and I appreciate that it is near and dear to the hon. member's as well. I look forward to working with the hon. member over the coming months and years on these important matters, and yes, we have so much ground to catch up on.

Our environmental governance regime at a federal level has been stripped to the bare bones, the scientific capacity reduced tremendously. We need to restore and improve upon our regulatory regime so that it is efficient and it works for our businesses, but at the same time provides for that level of protection of the environment that ultimately achieves the right to a healthy environment that all Canadians maintain.

We need our whole system to be rebuilt, whether that is environmental assessment, whether that is toxins management, whether we are talking about species at risk and habitat protection, or whether we are talking about national parks, including, I hope, a national park one day in the riding of Pontiac. We need to get to a better place in terms of sustainability. I believe we can achieve that working across the aisle with our partners in other parties.

[Translation]

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour to rise in the House in response to the Speech from the Throne.

[English]

As we all know, when we respond to the throne speech, when we look at the throne speech, we look at it from the background we come from. I look at it from my professional background. I was the general counsel of a multinational company with operations around the world. I understand the frustrations of Canadian businesses that are trying to do business abroad, and the frustrations in the R & D sector when we look at what monies companies are entitled to through R & D tax credits or otherwise.

I look at it through the perspective of having been an elected official at the municipal level for 21 years, 11 years as a city councillor and 10 years as a mayor. I fully understand why we want to look at the fact that municipalities are truly one of the levels of government that need to be represented at the table.

Finally, we look at it from the ridings we come from. Everyone in this chamber believes that his or her riding is the best riding in Canada. Of course, I feel the same. My riding encompasses the Town of Mount Royal, the city of Côte-Saint-Luc, the town of Hampstead, and Côte-des-Neiges NDG, which is a borough of the city of Montreal.

It is an incredibly diverse riding, a riding that has been represented by great men and women. The Right Hon. Pierre Elliott Trudeau represented this riding in this place, so did Sheila Finestone, and so did Irwin Cotler.

I have quite a legacy to carry on. I promise that I will be a member from Quebec who fights for a united Canada here and elsewhere.

The Address

• (1050)

[Translation]

It is very important to recognize that Canada is more than a collection of communities. Canada is a country with a vibrant population from coast to coast to coast.

As an MP, I will fight for bilingualism across Canada so that francophones can feel at home from British Columbia to Newfoundland.

[English]

An individual can be an English-speaking person and be at home in Pontiac, in Montreal, and in Quebec City.

I will fight for a strong Charter of Rights and respect of individual liberties. I will fight for a country that recognizes our multicultural heritage and the fact that people who come from whatever countries in the world to Canada bring us richness and diversity.

[Translation]

I also intend to follow in the footsteps of my predecessor, Irwin Cotler, and be an MP who respects all parties in the House.

[English]

We need to get along in a non-partisan way. I was so pleased that the Speech from the Throne talked about a new tone in government that would also empower MPs with stronger committees, with no more omnibus bills that bundle different issues and make people vote in different ways that they do not want to. And most importantly, there would be more free votes for members in the House of Commons so that we would all have a chance to pronounce ourselves according to the will of our riding and our own principles.

I was also very pleased that the throne speech talked about infrastructure and the biggest infrastructure program that has ever come to Canada. Those of us who come from municipal backgrounds in cities and towns across this great country, in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and New Brunswick, know that we need money for hard infrastructure like roads, aqueducts, and sewers. We need more money for public transit in our great metropolises, particularly in Montreal, where we need the money for the STM.

[Translation]

In my riding, a project of particular importance is the Cavendish Boulevard extension.

[English]

Cavendish Boulevard is the most important missing piece of the Montreal Island road network. We have talked about it for 50 years and it still has not happened. All of the cities in the agglomeration of Montreal, which is our regional government, strongly support the Cavendish extension. Over the last 10 years we put \$5 million into developing the engineering plans to make this project happen.

[Translation]

The cities in the agglomeration of Montreal have earmarked \$44 million to cover a third of the cost. Money also has to come from the federal and provincial governments. I hope that everyone in the House will show their support. This project is very important to me.

[English]

I hope we can all make that a consensus as well.

In the campaign many of us did a lot of door-to-door and wore lots of pairs of shoes out. Fortunately, I wear a lot of sneakers. In the campaign I met many people who need our help, people who need social housing, people who are living in social housing where the agreements between the federal government and their place of residence expired and were not renewed. Their rents dramatically escalated. Seniors living on their own had to choose between buying medication and paying for food.

I am so pleased that we have in this budget money for infrastructure for social housing, money to give seniors with the increase of a 10% guaranteed income supplement for seniors living on their own, and money for families with the child care benefit that would allow people who make less to get more so they can take their children out of poverty.

[Translation]

I am also very pleased that our government intends to improve our relationship with our best partner and friend, the United States of America.

[English]

Having worked in a company where 80% of our business was with the United States, I know how important that relationship is. I was very pleased that it was singled out in the throne speech as being of paramount importance.

Finally, I want to talk about diversity. Like many members in the urban environment, I represent a very diverse riding.

[Translation]

Some of my constituents are among the wealthiest, while others are among the least fortunate.

[English]

I have people who have come from different communities from all over the globe, from over 100 nations and speaking over 100 languages, just in my riding of Mount Royal.

• (1055)

[Translation]

We have a unique riding in Quebec. In our riding, the majority of people speak English, and where the Jewish community forms a plurality of people. It is quite rare.

[English]

The heart of Montreal's Filipino community is in my riding. Despite our differences, despite our linguistic differences, our religious differences, our cultural differences, we get along like gangbusters and that is diversity of Canada. Therefore, if I can leave one message in this chamber, it is this: let us appreciate the diversity of this amazing country from the territories, to Newfoundland, to British Columbia. Let us appreciate the different peoples who have come here and our aboriginal founders, the English, the French and all of those communities that have come here to join us. Let us recognize that in working together as we have as Canadians, we have developed the greatest country on earth.

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I know now that we have had this incredible honour of being elected to this place. All parties have the opportunity to convince Canadians that politicians should not be ranked next to used car salesmen at the end of the list of people they trust, but way up at the top. As a Parliament that works together across party lines, we will achieve great things for Canada.

Hon. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me first start by congratulating the member on his electoral victory to the House of Commons. He is absolutely right that this is a great country with diversity. Over the 18 years that I have been here, we have worked toward achieving the goal that the member is talking about. I have enjoyed my journeys to Quebec and all around the country.

I have a question for the member. At the current time, the mayor of Montreal, where the member comes from, has said that he is not going to support one of the most important projects that would unify this country. I am asking if the member will talk to my good, old friend. I should say he is an old friend because he was in this chamber, sitting exactly where the member is sitting, as the former minister of immigration. He was a friend.

Will the member tell Denis Coderre what he just said here, that this unity is required, that east and west should not be pitted against each other, and he should approve this thing? He should be selling that out there. Is he going to do that?

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, I do not think I am actually sitting in the place that the former member for Bourassa sat in the chamber since I am a little further back. That being said, as someone who served as a mayor on the island of Montreal in the regional government, I speak to the mayor of Montreal all the time. I will certainly share the member's observations with him.

Our government has clearly said we are looking at all sides of this situation and we have to look at it in the interests of the entire country.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague across the aisle on his entry to the House.

I want to draw attention today to a historic decision of the Human Rights Tribunal on the underfunding and the discrimination by the federal government against first nations children. Despite many pronouncements we have heard in the House in terms of a commitment to reconciliation, the question that many are asking is whether there will be immediate action by the new federal government.

I want to underscore that, unfortunately, the history of previous Liberal governments is one that has contributed to the inequality that first nations young people have faced, whether it is the imposition of the 2% cap, whether it is cuts to key programming for housing, health, education, and training, and so on and so forth.

Will the new government turn a new page, respond immediately to this historic decision, and act to end the discrimination that first nations youth face in our country?

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Mr. Speaker, this government and the minister herself have underscored our commitment to righting the

wrongs that have happened in this country with respect to our aboriginal populations. I can only say that the member can be sure of the commitment not only of the minister but of all of the members on this side of the House to work to ensure that aboriginal Canadians are treated as full and entire citizens in this country and have all of the rights and benefits that they should, including clean water, good education, and fair play throughout.

• (1100)

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to welcome my new colleague from Mount Royal. He has large shoes to fill. His predecessor was a champion in the fight against terrorism and spoke out openly about it.

I am wondering how he feels about the Minister of Foreign Affairs' refusal to explicitly condemn the incitement to kill Israelis by the Palestinian leadership.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Mr. Speaker, I can only say and underscore that the stabbing of innocent civilians in Israel is unacceptable. It is something that is absolutely opposed by me at all levels.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Gatineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I would like to inform you that I will be splitting my time with my colleague, the hon. member for Rivière-des-Mille-Îles.

As this is my first speech in this place, I would like to take the time to thank the people of Gatineau for putting their trust in me and electing me last October 19. It is an honour. After many years of public service spent advancing progressive, liberal values, I will commit myself completely to the well-being of my region and my country.

I would be remiss if I did not thank my campaign team, which not only worked day and night for the 80 days of the official campaign, but in some cases started working in June 2009. We knocked on many doors and participated in a great number of events. It was a good experience and an exciting one for all. Furthermore, I was inspired by the work the team did and their sense of community.

I would like to thank my wife, Janelle, who is an amazing businesswoman and mother, and also my three children, Liam, Cassandra, and Alex, who supported me throughout the election campaign. Like the members of any family that embarks on such an adventure, they made many sacrifices, and they are lending their father and husband for the next four years.

[*English*]

I also want to thank those with whom I have worked over the course of my time in public service. My colleague from Egmont remembers our first experience on behalf of the late Joseph Ghiz. I also thank my first boss, Frank McKenna, who remains the best mentor one could have and one of Canada's great promoters and philanthropists.

Finally, I want to acknowledge the Right Hon. Paul Martin, who asked me to play a small role in national politics and whom I will always be proud to call a friend.

*The Address**[Translation]*

I have the honour of representing an extremely dynamic riding, and I am humbled by that challenge. I am a Gatineau resident who is proud of his city, proud to raise a family there, and proud to live in such a spectacular region as the Outaouais, as my colleague from Pontiac mentioned. Through our innovative entrepreneurs, our history, our cultural and athletic achievements, our workers, and our tradition of public service, the people of Gatineau have helped to build the Canada of today.

The people of Gatineau are proud to be both Quebeckers and Canadians, to be primarily francophone but open to the world and other cultures, to be residents of the fourth-largest city in Quebec and the fourth-largest metropolitan area in Canada, and to be part of one of the most dynamic cities in the country.

Gatineau's population grew by 10% from 2005 to 2011, and it is still growing. That only happens in cities that offer their residents a good quality of life and economic opportunities.

I also want to take this opportunity to commend the elected officials in the region, at both the municipal and provincial levels, with whom we have been working closely. I will continue to support all those who have high hopes for Gatineau, who are working on projects, and who are helping us to ensure that our city is making progress.

However, there are challenges associated with our growth. Gatineau estimates its infrastructure needs at \$1.3 billion. This deficit is undermining our growth and our quality of life. Gatineau needs support for basic infrastructure, water and sewer systems, public transit, and roads.

Furthermore, since the Gréber report was released in 1950, we have identified the need for a new interprovincial bridge between Ottawa and Gatineau to ease traffic congestion, create economic opportunities on both sides of the river, and improve the quality of life of local residents.

The previous government, the cities of Ottawa and Gatineau, and the provinces of Ontario and Quebec agreed that the report released in 2013 would serve as the basis for the decision to move forward with this long-awaited project. I remain optimistic that this will be the case.

I am particularly pleased to see that our government committed to investing in infrastructure in the throne speech. These investments will benefit Gatineau, create jobs, and stimulate our economy.

• (1105)

The people of Gatineau also want the government to help diversify the region's economy. That is what I heard again during the pre-budget consultations I held last week with my Outaouais colleagues. Gatineau has lots of potential and plenty of opportunities to attract new industries and businesses. We have an airport, post-secondary institutions such as the UQO, and entrepreneurs ready to invest. I will support those diversification efforts.

All Outaouais MPs must be attuned to the needs of Canada's public service. I am the son of two public servants, and I understand how proud those people are to be working to improve the lives of

Canadians. However, over the past 10 years under the former government, they grew discouraged. They were disappointed in the previous government's lack of respect for the public service. We promised to restore respect for our public service, and I am very pleased with the new culture that is taking shape.

Public servants are also concerned about the steadily declining use of French in the federal public service. In his March 2014 annual report, the Commissioner of Official Languages, Graham Fraser, talked about the "subtle erosion of bilingualism in the federal public service through neglect and the unintended consequences of budget cuts".

I took note of the government's commitment in the throne speech and the ministerial mandate letters regarding the importance of Canada's two official languages. I am confident that our government will advance the situation and enhance the use of French within the federal government. When French flourishes, the entire country is enriched. Canada is stronger when Quebec and Quebeckers have a strong presence in all federal institutions.

Economically speaking, families and seniors in Gatineau are experiencing the same pressures as everywhere else: they are struggling to make ends meet; job prospects are sometimes limited; and they have serious social and health care needs.

I am proud to be part of a government that is making growth and support for the middle class its key priorities. We have already lowered taxes for the middle class, and we committed to helping families in need by creating the new Canada child benefit. We are going to create better opportunities for young Canadians by working with the provinces to make post-secondary education more affordable and create more jobs for students.

[English]

With the collapse in world commodity prices, the anemic record of economic growth that this government has inherited from the previous government, and the lack of progress in creating an economy of innovation over the last decade, this government will have to work hard to create economic opportunity for Canadians. I know my colleagues join with me in saying that is exactly what we intend to do.

[Translation]

We went through this in Quebec in the forestry and mining sector.

[English]

It is clear that work will have to be done through all of our industries to help create a 21st century economy, a tax system that favours investment, both foreign and domestic, and to help get our products to market safely and sustainably.

I am confident this government will create a means by which consensus can be reached on creating this future prosperity. It is unhelpful to participate in this economic debate by exacerbating regional tensions in Canada. I believe that when one region wins, we all win.

For my part, I will work with anyone in the House who wishes to roll up his or her sleeves and present real economic solutions for Canadians.

•(1110)

[Translation]

I am confident that the Liberal government's priorities reflect the aspirations of the people of Gatineau. We want a more prosperous and diversified economy. We want respect for the public service and the French language. We want investment in our infrastructure. We want Quebec to take its place in Canada and within the Government of Canada.

Finally, I am pleased to be part of a team that wants to work with all Canadians to make our country prosperous and progressive once again.

With the Prime Minister's team and this government, we will meet these challenges. Gatineau will answer the call.

[English]

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member talked a bit about the middle class and I want to ask a specific question about that.

The government has significantly cut back on the amount individuals can contribute to their tax-free savings accounts, in spite of the fact that all data shows that those in the middle and the low end are, in fact, more likely to use tax-free savings accounts. Over half of those who have maxed out their tax-free savings accounts are making less than \$60,000 a year.

Meanwhile, the new tax changes the government has brought in provide absolutely no tax relief for those earning less than \$45,000 a year. They are concerned for the middle class. People already have to be doing better than that in order to be considered. Meanwhile many low-income people who were using tax-free savings accounts are now worse off under the government's plan.

How does the member square those economic realities with the comments he has made about the middle class?

[Translation]

Mr. Steven MacKinnon: Mr. Speaker, I was very proud to run in the election as part of the Liberal Party, which has promised to give Canadians a fair tax system that will give hope to the middle class and those who aspire to be part of it.

[English]

I do not know where the hon. member gets his statistics with respect to TFSA's. I am not sure if people who make \$60,000 a year have \$10,000 after-tax income to deposit into a TFSA account.

We have put money right back into the pockets of those who make \$60,000 a year so they can look after their kids. If the hon. member waits until the next budget, we will not only do that, but we will deliver fairness for parents across the country. Because of the very initiatives promised by this government, nine out of ten Canadian families, hundreds of thousands of children, will be lifted out of poverty, and that will be delivered.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the hon. member from Gatineau on his election.

I appreciate the member bringing forward concerns for seniors and families struggling to make ends meet. The latest Bank of Canada

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report shows the record low price of oil that has rocked Canada's economy has not been matched by changes to prices at the pumps.

Last week, in my community in Oceanside, the price of gas at the pump was \$1.16 a litre. It was the highest in the country, more than the Northwest Territories. The previous government did not do anything to protect consumers at the pump to create more fairness for citizens, seniors and small business owners.

I want to know what the Liberal government will do to protect consumers, to ensure that we have fairness at the pump, and take gouging at the pump seriously. I hope the member can do something for us, and the government can honour and show respect to Canadians and consumers.

Mr. Steven MacKinnon: Mr. Speaker, as the member well knows, one of the great legacies among the many legacies of Liberal governments in this place is a strong competition framework. I know the Competition Bureau, which works at arm's length from the government, will work hard and will keep its eye riveted on gas prices across the country. I know it will continue to look into this.

The member mentioned fairness for seniors, for our middle class, and for children. I reiterate that this government and this party have committed to and will deliver to Canadians tax relief and relief for families that need it. Nine out of ten families will benefit from our new *prestations canadiennes pour les enfants, pour la famille*. Hundreds of thousands of children will be lifted out of poverty. What will create hope for the member's community, for my community, and for communities represented by all the members in the House is an economy that is stimulated by record investments and infrastructure.

•(1115)

[Translation]

Ms. Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to extend my very best wishes for the new year to my colleagues and all Canadians. I hope that 2016 will bring everyone happiness, peace, and prosperity.

The year 2015 was a busy year in many ways. I congratulate everyone here on their election. I would like to thank from the bottom of my heart the people of Rivière-des-Milles for the trust they placed in me on October 19. It is a true privilege, and I can assure them that I will show perseverance and diligence when working on the files that affect my riding, and represent with dignity the people of Rivière-des-Milles. It would not have been possible for me to speak in this place and respond to the speech from the throne without the invaluable support of the voters and my team of volunteers.

First of all, I would like to take advantage of the precious minutes I have been given to express my deep love for my riding, the place where I grew up and where my ambitions materialized. Rivière-des-Milles is located in the northern ring of Montreal. It consists of four municipalities and two RCMs, which are all quite different. These differences are the basis for the prosperity of Rivière-des-Milles, which can be considered the gateway to the Laurentians.

*The Address**[English]*

I will show the direct impacts of the throne speech based on examples from my riding.

[Translation]

First, the municipality of Deux-Montagnes, formerly known as Saint-Eustache-sur-le-Lac, is mainly residential. It is a great place for families to live. Why? Because it has high-quality community and sports facilities and new electrified transit infrastructure.

Deux-Montagnes is proof of the positive impact that modern infrastructure can have on the development of our municipalities and communities.

As indicated in the throne speech, our government will implement an ambitious infrastructure investment program based on the real concerns of Canadians. Canadians need to know that our government believes in Canadian families, and that is why we are going to make investments that will help them in their daily lives.

This infrastructure plan will allow me, in co-operation with my counterparts in the Quebec National Assembly, to ensure that work on Highways 13 and 19 is completed and that Highway 15 is widened to make room for a designated public transit lane from Blainville to the Montmorency metro station in Laval.

Second, today, Saint-Eustache, which was once known for the famous battle of the Patriots in 1837, is a vibrant city. Saint-Eustache has a diversified economy based on agriculture, the maple syrup industry, manufacturing engineering, and many emerging SMEs. One example is Nova Bus, which manufactures hybrid buses. I had the opportunity to visit the company's facilities in December and I realized just how great an impact it is having on public transit in Canada. Nova Bus will soon be building a model that is 100% electric and that could potentially be used by public transit companies across Canada.

In terms of agrifood, I cannot talk about Saint-Eustache without mentioning the Constantin sugar shack, which has been run by the Constantin family for four generations, or the Lalande and Jean Renaud & Fils sugar shacks, which are a source of pride for our community. Canada is extremely innovative, to say the least, and Rivière-des-Mille-Îles is no exception.

Saint-Eustache is not only economically diverse, but also demographically diverse. It is by far the biggest city in Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, and like most municipalities in Canada, its population is aging. It is therefore extremely important for our government to support our seniors and ensure that they can retire with dignity, because we never want to forget all the work that they did to build a prosperous and forward-looking country for future generations.

Our government will take direct action with the provinces and territories to make sure Canadians will be safer and healthier in retirement. In Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Saint-Eustache is fortunate to have a hospital that serves a large part of the Lower Laurentians area.

The government will work towards its throne speech objectives with the various levels of government, and that is why our government will actively listen to the provinces to keep our seniors healthy and well.

The throne speech is part of our effort to bring about real change. This real change shows that the government supports Canadians who work hard and who are the driving force of the Canadian economy. Yes, I am talking about the middle class.

● (1120)

[English]

What a chance, being a member in this government, a government that understands the real issues, a government that will invest in the middle class.

[Translation]

What do we have to say to those who are struggling to make ends meet, to those who have the courage to work for themselves, or to new arrivals?

[English]

We say that we have confidence in them, their dreams, and their aspirations.

[Translation]

I met with middle-class Canadians during the last election campaign, especially in residential neighbourhoods like Rosemère. Rosemère is a rural municipality where I lived for nine years. I raised my young children there. This city's economic sector is directly tied to the middle class. As we said in the throne speech, we will lower taxes for the middle class. This will benefit not only middle-class households, but also businesses.

My father worked in the retail sector. He opened a family grocery store in 1969 in Boisbriand, which was then known as Sainte-Thérèse-Ouest. As in many other Canadian towns at the time, whose prosperity relied on a single industry, a large majority of Boisbriand residents worked for General Motors.

Today, Boisbriand is an important economic, agrifood, industrial, and commercial centre. Take, for example, Faubourg Boisbriand, or all of the fantastic restaurant and shopping options. I am very proud of the innovation and entrepreneurial spirit in Boisbriand, and I am very proud to have lived there for over 18 years.

Technology and practices have evolved constantly over the past two decades. New sectors have sprung up and taken off. In Boisbriand, these changes have led to the diversification of eight industrial sectors and the birth of world-renowned industries such as Elopak, Aliments O'Sole Mio and a number of aerospace subcontractors, including DCM Aerospace.

The throne speech expressed our commitment to supporting these industries. Our government will make strategic investments in innovation and the clean technology sector. Canada's environmental leadership will help bring about real change. One thing is for sure: Canadians want a prosperous economy, but they also want it to be in perfect harmony with respect for the environment.

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Today, in 2016, it is ridiculous to deny the potential repercussions of maintaining the environmental status quo. It is also irresponsible to muzzle scientists calling for political action to reduce GHG emissions. The throne speech conveyed our commitment to consulting civil and scientific communities in the coming years. The environment is a priority in Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, and the ongoing development of industrial areas and the densification of urban areas is fully compliant with increasingly strict environmental standards.

The social environment is another important topic addressed in the throne speech. Massive investment in social infrastructure, including social housing, will permit a better distribution of wealth among Canadians. This initiative will have a significant positive impact on Canada as a whole and in my riding, especially in Saint-Eustache.

I am proud to be part of this government and such an experienced, dedicated team of people who are listening to Canadians' real concerns. I am proud to be part of the first federal government to form a gender-balanced cabinet. I am proud to see Canada's return to the world stage. I am proud to represent the people of Rivière-des-Mille-Îles and to be their MP. I have long been involved in my community through my previous career in provincial politics, my role as an employer and job creator, and my community work. I am proud to be able to continue my involvement through public service. The mandate my constituents gave me on October 19 means the world to me.

I have hope for the people of my region and I have confidence in them. I have hope for their ambitions and dreams. Canadians can finally dream of and aspire to a better life. I believe in a Canada that is more inclusive, open, and forward-looking.

• (1125)

[English]

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened quite intently to what the member was talking about. She talked about the importance of infrastructure and the public sector jobs it creates. However, in her speech and also in the Speech from the Throne there is very little vision for the private sector. With her background, my colleague must realize that the private sector drives job creation.

In Oshawa, we manufacture and assemble automobiles. The manufacturing sector contributes 8% of the GDP. However, in the Liberal platform and in the Speech from the Throne there is absolutely no plan for the manufacturing and automotive sectors. My colleague mentioned that there is a bus manufacturer in her riding. There is no plan for that manufacturer. There is also no plan and no mention in the Speech from the Throne with respect to the aerospace sector.

This year is a contract year for automotive assemblers. Our government had an automotive action plan that supported research and development and investment in the auto sector. I know the auto sector and the manufacturing sector are important for my colleague. Simply, will she push her government to come up with a plan for the auto sector, and when will that plan be coming forward?

[Translation]

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question and congratulate him on his election. I listened closely to what he had to say.

Our priority will be the middle class and lowering taxes, which will stimulate the business economy. I truly believe that, as my background is in that sector.

Mr. Randy Boissonnault (Edmonton Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my very hon. colleague on his election and his speech.

How will this government improve Canadians' quality of life, and how will having the regions work together strengthen national unity?

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Mr. Speaker, I truly believe that by investing in infrastructure, especially social infrastructure, and by helping people get better housing we will be better off.

[English]

Mr. Colin Carrie: Mr. Speaker, I have a follow-up question for the member across the aisle.

The manufacturing sector is very competitive internationally. It is wonderful that the government has committed to invest in further infrastructure, but the reality is that there needs to be a plan, there needs to be a vision, and there needs to be a way in which Canada can compete. What the Liberal government has put forward—policies that will increase the cost of energy, a price on carbon, changes to the pension plan—are things that make Canada less competitive. Therefore, without a plan, the opportunities for us to attract new investment here and be competitive internationally do not exist.

This is a contract year. We need to have a plan. We need to have a way for these auto manufacturers to work with the government, to partner with the government, to attract new investment here. However, there was no mention in the Speech from the Throne. There was no mention in the member's speech. There was no mention in the Liberal platform. We need to have a plan to attract these investments to keep these good-quality, middle-class jobs in my community, but also in her community.

My question for her is very simple. Will she please work with the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development and come up with an automotive sector plan? Will she present it promptly to the House, and when will she do that?

[Translation]

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my esteemed colleague for his question.

We will invest in research in order to seek out clean energy industries. Scientists must never again be muzzled. We must be global leaders by investing in new environmental industries.

The Address

• (1130)

[English]

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to rise in the House today to address the Speech from the Throne. Before I do, this is my first time speaking officially with a 10-minute speech in the House since the last election, so I would appreciate if my colleagues would give their thoughts and consideration to the people who volunteer, as we all do on our campaigns. Everyone here has a number of people to thank and be grateful for. I want to start with my campaign manager, David Parker, and all of the team. Shelley did an absolutely great job keeping me where I needed to be and on track, and that is not an easy thing to do in a marathon campaign. Jonathan did great work on Facebook. I thank everyone who did all the door knocking and canvassing in going door to door.

I have a brand new riding. At least half of the riding is new to me. I have been the member of Parliament for Wetaskiwin for the last 10 years, and now the riding consists of the north half of the city of Red Deer, the third largest city in Alberta. What an eye-opening experience for me to go door to door in a large urban area. As a country bumpkin who grew up on a farm north of Lacombe, even though I have always considered Red Deer the closest major city, the city where we would do our business, buy our groceries, and from time to time do all of our shopping, it certainly has changed since I frequented Red Deer a lot when I was a much younger man with my family.

Talking about family, I would also like to take this opportunity to thank my family: my wife Barbara and my kids, Eryk, Kasandra, and Krystian. I still remember their names after 10 years of being a member of Parliament. Being from western Canada, I spend about 14 hours a week just in transit to get here and get back, not to mention all the events a person has to do on the weekends and so on. I could not do what I do on behalf of the people I represent without their love, patience, and understanding. I can attest to all of those things in my duties as a member of Parliament. I certainly appreciate all that they do.

My riding has changed, but the issues that affect the folks in central Alberta have not changed. Whether one lives in Lacombe, Sylvan Lake, Ponoka, or the north end of Red Deer, all of these issues are the same. We all like to work hard and play hard, and of course we love the places we call home, wherever that happens to be in central Alberta.

I want to talk first and foremost about the absence of those issues that are most important to the folks in central Alberta that could have been or should have been in the Speech from the Throne. I will start by talking about agriculture. There was not one mention of agriculture.

I grew up on a farm. I was very lucky. I grew up in the same farmyard as my grandparents did, so I basically had two sets of parents. I had grandpa and grandma, who handed the farm off to my mom and dad. Of course, they are still on the farm right now. My sister is living there with her kids. That family farm and those generations continue to evolve. Agriculture is very important.

There was not one mention, not one signal of hope for the over 2.2 million Canadians that are either directly employed or work in the

agricultural sector, whether they are farmers or producers on some 90,000 farms across Canada or whether they work in the value-added sector. They could be working in places like Canadian Premium Meats in Lacombe, which does custom slaughter of various animals, most notably cattle. It is the only EU certified slaughter facility in Canada at this time. It is able to export whatever the customer demands to any place in the United States or the European Union. It is doing an absolutely fantastic job. It is only held back by the fact that we do not have more robust trade and that we have not been able to ratify things like the Canada-Europe trade agreement.

These things are inhibitors to the bison ranchers who sell their bison products domestically in the central Alberta area. One can go anywhere in central Alberta and buy some of the best bison products one could ever want to eat. These products should be on store shelves not only around Canada but around North America and of course all through Europe. There was not a mention of the value that actually adds.

Whether it is regular products like beef or pork or whatever the case may be, these are all things we grow in great abundance. I have the largest number of dairy farmers in Alberta in my riding. There are over a hundred farms in my constituency. The chair and vice chair of Alberta Milk, who I call Albert and Heini, live just down the road. These are my friends. These are the people I have grown up with. These are people who work hard every day and deserve to have those kinds of mentions, at least about the products they grow and the services they provide and the value they add to our economy. There was nary a mention of it. It is very frustrating.

There was nothing about market access or diversification. There was nothing about product diversification or research and technology advancements in the agricultural sector to keep it a more viable sector than it already is. Where I live in central Alberta, the growing season is only a couple of months a year. If it was not for advancements in research and technology in the agricultural sector, we would not be as competitive.

• (1135)

We cannot turn our cattle out and raise them on grass 12 months of the year, like they can in Brazil and Argentina and other places around the world. We have to depend on these technologies to be competitive.

Before I go any further and start going on my rant and litany about the energy sector, I would like to remind the Speaker that I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Souris—Moose Mountain.

I am very frustrated on behalf of all the farmers, producers, and ranchers in central Alberta who I meet at the coffee shop in Ponoka, or wherever I happen to be, who tell me that they are very concerned about the ability. We have had some good years in the last several years, but we have had no signal from the current Liberal government at all about these things being a priority, and that causes a lot of concern among the people I represent.

Let me get to the energy sector. I will make this a bit personal, if you will indulge me, Mr. Speaker.

The Address

I have been very lucky to have the background I have. As I said, I grew up on a farm, so I have some common sense. I am a bit of a mechanic, a bit of a welder, a bit of an electrician, and a bit of a carpenter. The reality is that I know how to work. I think with my head and work with my hands, and that value is easily translated into energy sector work, which is why we find so many people in the energy sector in Alberta. If one walks into any place that does service rigs or drilling rigs and says, "I am a farm boy", one does not even have to hand in a resumé. People are asked when they can start, because employers know what they are probably going to get. They are going to get someone with common sense, someone who knows how to get up early in the morning, go out and work hard, work all day, expect an honest return for that, and go back home. These are the things I was able to do.

I would work in the summer for parks. I enjoy the outdoors. I enjoyed that very much. However, in the winter, rather than going on employment insurance or whatever I could have done, I decided it did not make any sense for a farm boy to do that. I went out and worked in the service rigs. I worked for Trimat Well Servicing, for Roll'n Oilfield, and for Northstar doing directional drilling, because I had those kinds of skills.

I am not talking about just me. There are tens of thousands of people like me in central Alberta right now who are desperate, and not just because of the low commodity prices. We cannot blame all of this on low commodity prices. Yes, that is a factor. I understand that there are certain things that are beyond any government's particular control, but one does not take a situation that is bad and make it so much worse.

Right now Albertans in the energy sector are feeling the pinch. They might not have believed us years ago when we said that if they elect a provincial NDP premier and elect a federal Liberal government things are going to be bad for them. Do they not remember the 1980s? Do they not remember walking away from their homes? People in central Alberta right now who are working in the energy sector and have a 10% equity position in their houses are in big trouble. The keys are going to be coming onto the desks of the mortgage lenders in a matter of months if things are not turned around.

One does not solve this problem by leaving a vacuum in leadership to the point where mayors in little municipalities or big cities across this country are making decisions, or at least are pretending to make decisions, about things like pipelines, which should be uniting this country from coast to coast. This is absolutely atrocious. It is beyond comprehension that these kinds of conversations are even happening. Unless one gets around Canada on a bicycle, whittled with a bone knife, made out of wood, one is a hypocrite, because we use energy. If we took everything out of this room that is made with a petrochemical product, we would not even be able to record the information that is here.

Let us be realistic about what the petrochemical industry and energy industry actually does, and let us start having a serious conversation, because people's lives, their well-being, their welfare, and their ability to look after themselves are at stake here. A government's job is to let people who can take care of themselves take care of themselves and to use the vast tax base left over from

that to look after those who cannot. That is the role of government, and that is where this Speech from the Throne failed epically.

• (1140)

Mr. Randy Boissonnault (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the member opposite for his election and for his speech in the House today.

As a young boy, I did the milk run with my dad, collecting milk from various farms in northern Alberta. I sowed potatoes on the family homestead. I too have family members who are suffering in this economic downturn, family members who work in the oil patch and related industries.

I am sure the member opposite and his colleagues will be happy to know that our government prevailed on country-of-origin labelling and that Canada has been victorious in such a matter.

My question for the member opposite, as it relates to getting market access, is this. How do you and your caucus members plan to work with us constructively to achieve in months what you and your colleagues in government failed to achieve in 10 years, which is getting market access to tidewater?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Before we go back to the hon. member for Red Deer—Lacombe, I would like to remind members that they speak through the Chair and not directly to other members.

The hon. member for Red Deer—Lacombe.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Mr. Speaker, let me use this opportunity to edify my clearly unedified colleague across the way.

Before I do, I would like to welcome a fellow Albertan to the House. He is going to have a lot of things to explain to the 4.5 million Albertans by the end of his tenure here, because I do not think it is going to go well for him.

I will remind him that before the last Conservative government, there were only five countries Canada had trade agreements with. As it stands right now, the member and his new government have inherited over 40-some countries that either are trading partners with Canada or are pending trading partners with Canada. All the government has to do is sign the ratification of the Canada-Europe trade agreement and the trans-Pacific partnership to make those things a reality.

We have not had a very clear signal about what the Liberals are going to do on that front, but if he is going to talk about things like pipelines, one thing they should not do is send a signal to the market that they are going to ban tanker traffic off the west coast to appease a special interest group, which will shut down the northern gateway pipeline that would put billions of dollars of Alberta crude into the marketplace, eliminating the price differential that Alberta's captive market currently is in the North American marketplace.

The Address

If you will indulge me, Mr. Speaker, in the last 10 years, the northern Alberta Clipper pipeline, applied for on May 30, 2007, fully in service in April 2010, produced 450,000 barrels of oil a day; TransCanada Keystone, not Keystone XL, applied for on December 12, 2006, fully implemented in June 2010, produced 435,000 barrels per day; the Kinder Morgan anchor loop project increased capacity by 40,000 barrels per day, and it was done in October 2006; the Enbridge line 9 reversal, applied for in 2014, has reversed and produced 300,000 barrels of oil per day. That is over 1.2 billion barrels of oil flowing in projects that were started and implemented in the last 10 years. That does not even include the projects that were applied for and approved and that are pending construction, waiting for a market signal from the current government.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the member for Red Deer—Lacombe for his re-election.

I too had the opportunity to meet with Alberta farm producers last week. I attended the meeting of the Alberta Federation of Agriculture with the NDP agriculture critic. I had a terrific day with them and followed up with a meeting with Albert De Boer, who has been involved with the Canadian Dairy Farmers.

I wonder if the member could speak to some of the issues that were raised to me and my colleague by the farmers and producers. Alberta producers are still not happy with the previous government's record on getting their crops to market, and I am wondering if the member could speak to whether the Liberals are going to support greater regulation and action by the federal government to start regulating the rail industry.

Second, I am informed that the dairy industry continues to be opposed to the TPP and is disappointed that the previous government did not support action on milk proteins.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Mr. Speaker, I would like to welcome back my colleague from Edmonton—Strathcona. It is always great to see her in the House.

My colleague brought up the issue of rail. The Conservative government had the rail review process and legislated action to ensure that the grains and oilseeds got to the port of Vancouver or any other port in time to make sure that the waiting ships were not charging demurrage to farmers. The previous government put that through and worked with the rail companies on that. The reality is that if the NDP and all of its supporters were not so happy to be blocking pipelines, we could free up a lot more rail service to get agriculture products to ports.

• (1145)

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my great pleasure to rise for my speech in the House of Commons.

I would like to thank all my constituents, the great people of Souris—Moose Mountain, for putting their faith and trust in me as their representative in this honoured institution. I have always believed and said that this seat belongs to the constituents of Souris—Moose Mountain, and I will be their voice here in the House.

It takes hard work by many people to get each member elected to these seats, and I wish to thank all of those volunteers who gave

tirelessly of their time and efforts. An unfettered appreciation and humble thanks go to my campaign team and my EDA.

In addition, I would not be here today if it were not for the guidance, education, and love of my family, friends, and educators. My parents taught me to believe in four things: my country, my family, my God, and my queen. For this, I am extremely grateful. My father, the late Major-General Gordon Kitchen, served Canada with distinction and afforded me the opportunity to see many parts of the world, to learn about societies and governments. I know that my father, along with my mother, the late Joan Kitchen, look down on me today with great pride.

When asked who inspires me the most, my first response is my wife, Donna. We all know that spouses are our strength. For 32 years, she has stood beside me and supported me in all of my career decisions. She has raised three fantastic children who have become productive members of society. She is caring and compassionate as a mother and a registered nurse. Whether it has been caring for infants at Sick Kids Hospital, teaching nursing skills to aspiring nursing students, or assessing seniors in long-term care, she has been dedicated to each and every job, and still works diligently with her clients today.

I cannot forget to mention the positive encouragement and support I receive from my children: Andrew, Kathryn and Stephen. I would be remiss if I did not thank my daughter Kathryn for all the work and extra effort she put in during the campaign. I am grateful for the support of my brother-in-law, my in-laws, my brothers, and my sister who is with us here today in the gallery.

For those who do not know it, let me introduce the wonderful riding of Souris—Moose Mountain. Our riding is a rural riding of an area of 43,000 kilometres. We are bordered by Manitoba to the east and the United States to the south. Its two major centres are Weyburn and Estevan. From the northeast to southwest corners, Rocanville to Coronach, is a five-hour drive. From the southeast to the northwest corners, Carnduff to Kronau, it is a four-hour drive.

I mention the geography because over the past 26 years I have travelled these roads and seen steady growth in the economy, traffic, activity, and residents. Now with the collapse of the oil industry, this has made for dire times. When I drove to Regina on Saturday, the silence brought by the inactivity was deafening. Where I used to see drilling rigs, service rigs, water haulers, tankers, and workers out and about, there are none. There have been thousands of layoffs, store closures, restaurant closures, empty hotels, and houses for sale. Where there used to be a beehive of activity, there is now just a trickle. There is a 33% increase in employment insurance. It is not just the rig hands; it is office staff downsizing and consultants looking for work.

The Address

Our economy is struggling. Canadians are struggling. Canada's oil producers are struggling. Our vast prosperous energy sector is being hit hard by the fall in global oil prices. This has drastically affected our national economy and brought hardship to many Canadian families.

We cannot ignore the many Canadians who are losing their jobs and shutting their company doors as a result of the global oil price. While the Canadian government is not responsible for the global oil price, we will be responsible for the ongoing hardships if we do not intervene with meaningful steps to assist Canadians while they go through this struggle.

I have heard from many constituents that the west, in particular the oil industry, is fearful of the way it has been treated by previous Liberal governments. The throne speech did nothing to allay those fears. Endorsement of the energy east pipeline, which runs through the northern portion of my constituency, would assist to dispel this statement.

Furthermore, it would bring great benefit to all Canadians. It is the safest way to move oil product. It would enhance the movement of oil from Saskatchewan and Alberta, and get it to tide. Processing it and getting the product to tidewater and markets around the world would be a value-added boost to the industry. The economic benefit to Canada with the jobs created in building the pipeline would help to strengthen the middle class with good-paying jobs, a mandate the Liberal government claims to be a priority.

The Speech from the Throne provided little comfort for my constituents. There was no mention of the agriculture industry, the energy sector was left to swing in the wind, and promised infrastructure spending appears to be a lifetime away. As a professional, I am a chiropractor. An analogy I use is that the backbone of my riding is the agriculture industry and the appendages are the energy sector.

● (1150)

In my research of prior throne speeches, I came across a response to the Liberal government's 2004 throne speech by my predecessor, Mr. Ed Komarnicki, former MP for Souris—Moose Mountain. At that time, he stated the government showed no support of agriculture, as well—and, now, we see its reincarnation.

To continue to survive, our farmers and ranchers need markets to sell their products to. Saskatchewan is a major exporter of its resources and opening new markets is a tremendous benefit to our producers. The trans-Pacific partnership is just such an opportunity. Not only would it open new markets for our producers, it would reduce excessive tariffs on both our canola and cattle producers. The government needs to step forward, bring the trade deal to the House and not just sign and endorse it, but ratify it.

Within the past couple of weeks, I have been receiving many inquiries and requests for information on infrastructure spending. In fact, last week, the city manager of Estevan contacted my office about a billion-dollar infrastructure funding he had heard rumours about. There has been a significant need for infrastructure funding in my region. With the age of structures and the prior rapid growth, communities are lagging behind in their basic infrastructure and, in particular, water treatment facilities.

The Speech from the Throne talked about infrastructure investment. If the talk about this \$1 billion is true, we need to know the rules and procedures for communities to access this; more specifically, what the parameters are, who can apply, when it will be available, and how oil-depressed areas will be defined.

The Speech from the Throne talked about investing in clean technology and support for companies seeking to export these technologies. It appears that the main economic focus is to grow a clean environment and a strong economy in tandem. While we all agree with the sentiment that environmental protection and economic strength are not incompatible, the government must realize that we cannot wait for the passage and implementation of environmental policy to begin stabilizing and growing Canada's economy. We need to utilize the technologies we have today, such as carbon capture, to better our economy today.

Souris—Moose Mountain is home to Canada's state-of-the-art post-combustion coal-fired carbon capture and storage project at Boundary Dam, utilizing low-emission power generation, which was financed with \$249 million from the previous Conservative government. Estevan's Boundary Dam can take one million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions a year out of the environment, which is the equivalent of taking 250,000 cars off the road.

Coal is used to provide power around the world. It is cheaper to use. However, we do need to reduce greenhouse gases. This technology reduces our impact on the environment. This is a ready-made project. It needs to be implemented.

My constituents' concerns are exacerbated by comments made with respect to Canada's resourcefulness. The extraction of our vast natural resources is a job that requires what lies between the ears. For the people of Souris—Moose Mountain, the extraction of coal and oil is a complex process that has required the brainpower of engineers, geologists, economists, and accountants. It requires schooling, safety training, and above all, common sense.

The same goes for our farmers. It would be grossly inaccurate to assume that farmers rely solely on what lies under their feet. Ranchers and farmers in Souris—Moose Mountain are business owners who plan, seed, harvest, sell their crop, maintain equipment, and manage their staff. As I am sure all farmers and resource workers would agree, they can be the smartest in these respective fields, as resourceful as they can be, in cutting costs, finding buyers, but if the resources do not exist and the markets to sell them are not open, then what lies between their ears becomes moot.

The Address

Finally, I would like to end my remarks with sincere thanks to my party leader for making me an official opposition critic for sport. I look forward to working with the Minister of Sport and Persons with Disabilities to enhance the health of Canadians through sport and recreation.

I encourage all members to regularly stretch and be active whenever possible, whether by taking the stairs instead of the elevator or by walking to their destination.

In closing, the government talks about Canadians wanting their government to do different things and to do things differently. I truly hope there is more to come because, as I have indicated, it appears to be more of a reincarnation of the same old.

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Intergovernmental Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to welcome the new member to the House and, in particular, I would like to pay my respects to the service of his father, which he referenced. We recognize that it is the service of our veterans that allows us to stand here to debate these issues and, for that, our respect and gratitude is extended.

The member spoke about the infrastructure situation in his home province and about the situation facing Estevan in particular.

However, also having had conversations with the mayors of Saskatoon and Regina recently, I understand that those cities are also facing enormous pressures to get infrastructure spending out this year. One of the situations they are facing is an election on the horizon that may tie up speedy agreement for and delivery of infrastructure dollars to those municipalities if the province is not engaged quickly and the budget is not passed quickly, in large part because a lot of the infrastructure money announced by the previous government was never delivered to the province that the member comes from. That is one of the reasons why so many infrastructure programs across this country have not had work done on them in the last year.

Will the member opposite co-operate and work with this government to ensure that the infrastructure announcements forthcoming in the budget and the attempts to get last year's money out the door will be successful so that the municipalities of Saskatchewan, in particular, get dollars delivered quickly and we do not miss another construction season in his own province?

• (1155)

Mr. Robert Kitchen: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question and the comments about infrastructure.

In Estevan in my riding, there are thousands of areas and communities that have put out applications. These are out there, and they have been waiting. They were told they were being put on hold because of the election. The election was in October. There is time enough for people to turn around and say what has been approved, what is out there, and to get it out there so that they can get those things going. These communities have shovel-ready projects already set up and ready to do those things. It is just a question of the government giving them the okay.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in response to the member for Souris—Moose Mountain, I must say that it is a little rich after 10 years of Conservative control

in the House and 41 years of Conservative control in the Alberta legislature to not take some responsibility for the job losses we are seeing in the region.

I would suggest that if any party had any hope of building a pipeline, an unrefined fuel export scheme, and hoped to get a social licence and community support for projects like that, they might consider having that fuel add to Canada's energy security and add to the number of jobs by our refining wherever we can locally, by having some Canadian ownership and Canadian control, and not by having gutted environmental assessment hearings so that public hearings actually involve no hearing, but witnesses who cannot speak and cannot be cross-examined. Furthermore, the Conservative government fought for 10 years and spent at least \$100 million of taxpayers' money fighting the truth of indigenous control and the requirement for consent around land use. If those things had not happened, I think the member's government might not have left residents of Alberta in the situation we are now in. The member cannot blame the New Democrat government in Alberta for what happened in the last five or six months.

I will close with the words of a former Conservative MP and former premier of Alberta, Jim Prentice, right before he lost the election to the NDP: "Look in the mirror".

Mr. Robert Kitchen: Mr. Speaker, I am not certain I really understood the question put by the member to me. However, I can say that there has been a national energy program that has looked at and assessed all the issues of pipelines. It has gone through all the proper steps, has done the assessments and came up with the assessment to say that these are the steps that need to be met. It is up to the proponents to come up and finish those comments.

A lot of these processes would be furthered if members from the New Democratic Party would stand up and support the process.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Don Valley East.

[*English*]

Let me begin by congratulating you, Mr. Speaker, on your appointment and your place in the chair. It is also wonderful to have you back in the House after a brief hiatus.

I rise for the first time in this 42nd Parliament, and I would like to begin by thanking the good people of the riding of Lac-Saint-Louis in Montreal's West Island for investing their faith in me once again. It is a weighty responsibility and one that, of course, I take very seriously. I look forward to working hard again in this Parliament to represent my constituents well here in the federal Parliament.

The throne speech, which we are debating today, is a fitting reflection of the themes of the election campaign. It speaks to a desire for real change in this country. It is an eloquent statement of the government's intention to bring about the real change Canadians have clearly said they want, change Canadians know is needed in order to move this country forward.

The Address

I am not trying to be partisan. Blind and gratuitous partisanship is not constructive. It is not an avenue that leads to sound public policy; in any event, it is not what my constituents like or want. It is fair to say that there was a sense expressed across this land, from the Atlantic provinces, through Quebec, Ontario, the Prairies, and Alberta to British Columbia, that a new impetus was required to deal with the steady accumulation of challenges, including most importantly on the economic front, that the previous government was no longer able to effectively address with its ongoing approach to governance and policy; and that it was time to move past a certain policy inertia in so many areas, from the economy, to aboriginal and foreign policy issues, to the environment, which is itself today so essential to economic policy.

On October 19, Canadians responded in the affirmative to the view that new ideas and the will to implement these were needed for Canada's future prosperity in a fast-moving, highly competitive and complex world and that new ideas were also the key to our cultural and social progress. That is what the throne speech is all about: new ideas to address lingering issues and meet new rapidly emerging challenges, again with a special focus on making meaningful progress on stubborn economic problems that are undermining Canada's middle class.

The core of our government's economic message is that we need to invest in the future in order to bring tangible benefits to Canadians and their families today and tomorrow. We responded in our election platform by, among other things, committing to doubling infrastructure spending over the next 10 years by a total of \$60 billion in extra spending. I cannot say at this time what the profile of that spending will be over time. The Minister of Finance and the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities are working diligently on that question as we speak.

● (1200)

[*Translation*]

As I mentioned, we have an ambitious agenda, which was at the core of the Speech from the Throne. I think you might say that it is custom-made for my riding. That is not the case. This agenda is custom-made for all ridings in Canada, and I am talking about our commitment to increase our investment in infrastructure.

We have made a commitment to invest in Canada's infrastructure, and in three components in particular: green infrastructure, public transit, and social infrastructure, such as social housing.

My riding of Lac-Saint-Louis is a typical middle-class riding. However, it has some needs that the Liberal platform will address, especially with respect to infrastructure investment, to which we are committed.

[*English*]

My riding is a good, middle-class riding with a vibrant economy and a growing population. It has a wonderful natural environment. It is surrounded on three sides by water, including the mighty St. Lawrence. There are pockets of serious and urgent need in my riding, and all three parts of our infrastructure plan will respond to these needs. I would like to go through all three aspects of our infrastructure plan and just relate how those aspects will help the people in my riding of Lac-Saint-Louis.

For example, a group called the West Island Association for the Intellectually Handicapped has prepared a shovel-ready project. It is ready to go as soon as the funds can be unlocked. This project would create a community centre that would provide much-needed space for the organization to expand its existing activities for families with special needs children. However, it would be more than that. It would open itself to a broader set of needs in the community. For example, it would provide a place for parents to meet and talk to each other about how their children are learning, behaving, and playing and how they can encourage positive development through parenting, even in a low-resource family. That meeting place would also be used, no doubt, to bring people together to create maybe some social enterprises, some businesses that are run to raise revenues to finance a more social mandate. Our government's infrastructure plan will hopefully help an organization like the West Island Association for the Intellectually Handicapped to bring this dream to fruition.

Second, our funds for public transit will be welcome. There is a project on the table called le Train de l'Ouest. It has been in the works for about 15 years. It was the idea of my predecessor Clifford Lincoln, who represented my riding for 10 years before I was elected. This project started as a germ of an idea, and today it is shovel-ready. We are awaiting a decision by Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec as to its financing for the project. Our new infrastructure program and the additional funds in that program mean that the federal government would be able to be a partner in that project and hopefully influence the shape of that project. I am looking forward to working with our government and with the mayors of my riding and the MNAs, the provincial representatives, to make this project finally come true. We need public transit on the West Island of Montreal. We have a train, but it shares the tracks with freight trains and the service is not what it should be.

Finally, I met with the mayor and some councillors of the village of Senneville in my riding a couple of weeks ago and they talked to me about the need to replace their sewage systems. That is just the kind of project that would fit well with that aspect of our infrastructure plan, which we call investing in green projects.

I look forward to working with my colleagues and with other stakeholders in making sure that our plan fills the important needs of my community, as I know it will fill the important needs of communities across this country.

● (1205)

Ms. Dianne Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am just wondering when the plan for the green infrastructure, the social infrastructure, and the infrastructure plan will be rolled out. Given that there is \$20 million for each of those elements over a 10-year period, which comes out to about \$2 billion per year, I am wondering how many additional jobs that would create and how that would spur on the economy.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Mr. Speaker, I welcome the hon. member to the House and congratulate her on her election.

The Address

As the member knows, we have annual budgets in the House, and it is through those annual budgets that details are given in regard to initiatives like the ones I was speaking about in my speech. In terms of the number of jobs, it will depend on the mix of spending. Some projects will create more jobs than others. The point of infrastructure spending is to bring tangible benefits to Canadians today but also to prepare the ground for economic recovery in the future. If we have an economic recovery but we cannot get people from point A to point B, from their homes to the jobs that are opening up, then that economic recovery will hit a ceiling.

We are investing for benefit today, but really we are looking toward the future. This is a future-oriented government, and that is why we are making those investments.

● (1210)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Intergovernmental Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I note with interest the way in which the hon. member populated the needs of his riding as they related to a social infrastructure, which is part of a larger envelope of spending, which includes housing.

There have been criticisms, and we certainly heard from the third party in the election that social infrastructure that was not dedicated entirely to housing was deficient, and we should only be doing housing and housing alone, and the other add-ons should come from other ministries.

Could the hon. member please talk about the importance of integrating social infrastructure and housing simultaneously to build complete and successful communities, and why it is so critically important that we do not just do housing and housing alone, that we integrate the arrival of social services, house those social services as we build new communities and house Canadians?

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question, because over time we have learned to see the world a little differently than we used to. We used to see it as a group of silos. Now we see the world as an ecosystem; we see communities as ecosystems; and I have often said to my constituents that what is so special about my community—and I am sure this is the case of all the communities represented here—is that we have a network of community groups that fulfill just about every need that an individual or a family could have.

I often say to my constituents that, yes, we have nice homes in our riding. They are buildings on a lot with a car, but that is not a community. A community is when the people in those homes gather in places like the Kizmet Centre, which hopefully will be built, to share ideas and to make connections to help each other.

That is why housing is important. Of course it is important, but we have to bring the people who live in those homes, whether they be social housing or single-unit homes, together to co-operate and to share their lives together.

[Translation]

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague on his re-election and his speech in the House today.

During the election campaign, I had the opportunity to speak with many dairy farmers all across the riding of Berthier—Maskinongé.

They raised serious concerns about trade agreements such as CETA and the TPP.

One of the Liberal Party's election promises was to resolve the issue of milk protein. The 100-day deadline is just around the corner. I know that the Liberals have a lot on their plate right now and that it is not always easy to fulfill promises, but I want to hear the member's comments about when the government plans to take concrete action to resolve the issue of milk protein imports from the United States, since that represents \$50,000 a year in losses for our farmers.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Mr. Speaker, I too would like to congratulate the hon. member on her re-election.

My riding is often called a suburb, but it also has a rural aspect. In fact, we are fortunate to have the environmental and agricultural sciences faculty of McGill University in Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue, so I know a thing or two about the issues facing the rural and farming sector. In response to the question raised about the deadline, I know that we have talked about it and that we spoke with representatives of the dairy industry when we were in opposition. However, unfortunately, since I am not the Minister of Agriculture, I do not have an answer regarding the specific deadline.

● (1215)

[English]

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to speak to the Speech from the Throne.

As the member for the great riding of Don Valley East, there are significant steps noted in the Speech from the Throne that will have good, long-term benefits for my constituents and for all Canadians.

Let me begin with the recognition in the throne speech that diversity is our strength. In Don Valley East, close to 60% of the population are first-generation Canadians. People have come to Canada from different parts of the world with one common purpose: to provide a better future for themselves and their families.

Many people in my riding, having established themselves, are giving back to newcomers. A wonderful example of this is an agency called The Clothing Drive. It provides clothing, boots, shoes, school bags, and so forth to hundreds of newly arrived Syrian refugees. I was proud to have participated in the official opening of its office in my riding.

This organization started as a Facebook post stating, "I need help." Within four weeks it grew to hundreds and thousands of volunteers from all different backgrounds and cultures whose one main purpose was to help. This is the Canadian spirit. When we work together, we are a phenomenal force for change and for the betterment of society.

The past 10 years have been years of divisiveness. People are tired of that type of nastiness and they want to take back their Canada. This generosity and caring became evident in the riding after our Prime Minister set the example and tone for all Canadians. Thanks to his leadership, we are utilizing this caring nature.

The Address

Two weeks ago I welcomed 300 refugees into my riding and was overwhelmed by the generosity of the faith groups, the civil societies, and the individuals who came forward to offer their assistance. As an example, a church group in my riding raised \$3.6 million, which is fantastic. It wants to sponsor 17 Syrian refugee families. That is wonderful. It would like to relieve the government of those 17 families. There are synagogues and mosques that have already sponsored four and five families each.

A touching example was when I held a town hall meeting on Syrian refugees. One member from a church group had just picked up his family from the airport and was looking for suitable accommodations. Lo and behold, a generous Canadian offered his basement there and then. He remodelled his house for the family's needs. I am happy to say that an Iraqi Christian family is well settled in a Muslim house. That is the type of pluralism we should work toward. I am glad to say that with this government, Canada is back.

Our government committed to growing the middle class. The first order of business for our government was to reduce the tax rate for those earning between \$45,000 and \$90,000. This tax break is beneficial to 90% of the population.

In my riding, almost half of the residents earn less than \$50,000. They are hard-working people who contribute to the Canadian economy. Our government's tax break is important as it will put money back into the pockets of 90% of Canadians. With this extra disposable income, they will help grow the economy.

I am sure there are many hon. members in the House who are dealing with high rates of unemployment in their riding. In Don Valley East, the unemployment rate is 11%, much higher than the national average. Why? Because over the past 10 years we have not invested in the right form of economy. The unemployment rate is even higher for our youth. Investing in the middle class means that people who need help will receive it. This includes people who are struggling to make ends meet and who want to improve their standard of living.

• (1220)

The government understands that investing in people and our future generation is important. How we invest is as critical as in whom we invest. Our Canada child benefit is a strong pillar in helping to grow the economy and the middle class. Raising a child is expensive. There are parents who work at two to three jobs just to make ends meet. These are survival economies. Therefore, our targeted Canada child care benefit would help those people who need it the most.

The third pillar in growing the economy is to invest in infrastructure, both social and physical, like roads, transit signals, etc. In a place like Toronto or Vancouver, the prices of housing is unattainable for those earning between \$45,000 and \$50,000. Therefore, investing in social infrastructure is important.

I had the opportunity, together with my other colleagues, to meet with the mayor of Toronto, the Hon. John Tory. The mayor and his team of councillors understand the importance of this investment and are ready to partner with the government. They are excited that the federal government is back in business, that the government is communicating with them and treating them with respect by

allowing them to choose projects that would have the maximum return on investment, both from a social justice perspective and job creation perspective.

The mayor was particularly pleased with investments in transit as well. Canada's productivity, as we know, has fallen over the past 10 years. Intelligent investments in transit in a large city like Toronto is important. It helps move people faster, helps in reducing commute times, and helps in reducing stress times, thereby increasing the overall productivity. In my riding, a large number of people rely on public transit to take them to work or school, or to help them volunteer. Therefore, our investment in public transit makes it possible for them to be more efficient, effective, and productive.

To grow the economy we need a cohesive strategy, and that is exactly what our government has done by cutting taxes for middle income people; investing in our future through our Canada child care benefit; investing in infrastructure, including social housing, transit, etc.; and investing in post-secondary education. This is a sure way to boost the economy.

However, the sustainability of the economy relies on a clean environment. For the past 10 years the previous government had denied the effects of climate change and was not willing to diversify its resources. Had it done so we would not be in the situation we are in today. We would have had a cleaner, more prosperous economic environment. Through the previous government's inability or negligence, we lost 74% of the clean energy market. Our government therefore is taking the bold step of engaging with the provinces and territories in ensuring we have the best scientists, engineers, good researchers, and that we regain the market share as we move forward. We have committed to investing in green technology and the jobs of the future.

In Don Valley East, we have a very well-educated population. In my riding, 40% of the residents have either a university or college education, which is above the national average. These well-educated people would benefit from our investment in the jobs that are created through our partnership with the environment.

Our government is committed to making real change. We were elected on our commitment for a better, prosperous Canada, an all-inclusive Canada, a Canada that respects its diversity, a Canada that is strong because of its diversity. The Speech from the Throne delivers that message very clearly.

• (1225)

Mr. Fin Donnelly (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's intervention. She spoke about Canadians who were working hard just to make ends meet and that they were living from paycheque to paycheque. She spoke about investing in the right kind of people.

Oxfam recently released a study which highlighted that the gap between the rich and the poor was growing around the world. The government had an opportunity to address this problem in Canada. However, the Liberals' so-called middle-class tax cut ends up benefiting 30% of the high middle class. In fact, the richest 10% are benefiting from this tax shift.

The Address

How are we not addressing the issue for all those in the middle class and those who are actually living paycheque to paycheque? This, unfortunately, is not being addressed? Could my hon. colleague respond to that?

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi: Mr. Speaker, as a chartered professional accountant, I do a lot of tax returns. Our government's investment in the middle class by cutting taxes for nine out of ten people is a very good step.

The member talked about the gap between the rich and the poor. That gap has been growing over the past 10 years. We have chosen to remedy that situation, and we have done it through wise tax cuts, investment in the Canada child benefit program, investment in infrastructure. Together this cohesive strategy will help the economy grow.

Ms. Kim Rudd (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the things my hon. colleague talked about were families, specifically families in her community, and how they were getting by and trying to move their lives forward. Could she expand a little on the Canada child benefit, how that is lifting 316,000 children out of poverty, and how that is going to impact families in her riding?

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi: Mr. Speaker, people in my riding earning \$45,000 to \$50,000 cannot really afford child care. This additional money they will get, which is geared to income, will benefit them. As the member mentioned, it will lift 316,000 children out of poverty.

A lot of people use the food banks. A lot of people have to work two to three jobs to make ends meet. This will put more money in their pocket to help them alleviate that poverty level.

Ms. Dianne Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to hear my colleague talk about infrastructure, green infrastructure and social infrastructure. I am very proud this government did set up the green infrastructure fund that funded and promoted biofuel, organic waste treatment, production of biogas, geothermal, and a reduction in greenhouse gases. I look forward to the additional \$20 billion that will go into that fund.

I also want to talk a little about the social infrastructure and the influx of the 25,000 refugees.

In the city Surrey, where I was a former mayor, 95 languages are spoken and we have the largest influx of government-assisted refugees in the province. We are expecting about 900 refugees during this next influx, with 60% under the age of 18. We currently have an overburdened school district. We need up to 425 long-term housing units for the refugees as well as school expansion. Also, there is the potential of a welcome centre closing and the laying-off of settlement workers.

How are the Liberals going to accommodate the refugee influx and will that fall under the social infrastructure program?

• (1230)

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi: Mr. Speaker, the member asked about a lot of things. Number one, in terms of green technology, Liberals are committed to investing \$20 billion in green technology. The previous government had no clue about climate change, so we are regaining our strength.

In terms of the Syrian refugees, this is the first time that different levels of government are being consulted. The previous prime minister had no consultation, no meetings with the first ministers, no meetings with any territorial governments. We are back in business by engaging them. As I mentioned, ways are being created within my riding for people to come together and offer assistance to take over government-assisted refugees so that they, as part of the Canadian mentality, engage others and participate.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am splitting my time with my colleague, the member of Parliament representing Berthier—Maskinongé.

Because this is my first full speech in the House, I want to thank the voters and volunteers of Nanaimo—Ladysmith, and my family and friends for the honour of their support and the great privilege of being in this House. I also salute my local government colleagues and constituents who taught me a great deal over four terms serving in office.

I also want to state the privilege of living on the unceded territory of three first nations in my riding, Snuneymuxw, Stz'uminus, and Snaw-naw-as or Nanoose First Nation, along with many Métis and indigenous leaders in the community and many residents. They are teaching me every day about the importance of reconciliation around working on right relationship, work that Canada needs to do vitally. They are teaching me about the importance of holding an inquiry into the murdered and missing indigenous women, implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, implementing recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and moving forward in a true nation-to-nation relationship.

Those were all common cause commitments between the Liberals and New Democrats through the election campaign, but in the throne speech there were no details and no commitments. That makes it hard to pin good intentions down. For concrete actions that might build goodwill, I would love to have seen the Liberal government commit to dedicated investments and a clear plan around its commitment to eliminate boil water advisories on reserve. This is too important for our country to build hopes high and then not to have them implemented.

I am going to flag a few other hits and misses in the throne speech. I am very relieved to see the government reiterate its commitments to infrastructure investments, but we want detail on how much and how they will be distributed. Inter-regional public transit is an example of a win-win-win investment. It is good for our economy, community, and environment.

The Address

Nanaimo—Ladysmith has a transit gap between its two communities. We cannot take public transit between Nanaimo and Ladysmith and they are only 20 minutes apart. That makes it hard to get a job outside one's immediate community, it is bad for business, it is bad for the environment. Better yet, supporting inter-regional transit into the riding of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford would connect the burgeoning campuses of Vancouver Island University. Inter-regional transit connecting those two communities would be very good for student affordability, let alone the economy and environment.

In my home community, Gabriola Island, residents got tired of waiting on long lists for public transit funding, so they established their own regional service. For a community of just 4,000 people, they have funded three biofuel buses, with some support from the regional district of Nanaimo. They run the whole system on volunteers and on Saturday they celebrated their 33,333rd passenger. It is fantastic work by a very small community organization. I am very proud of what they have done, but running public transit should not fall only to community volunteers. We badly need strong federal and provincial government partners to make public transit work.

Last year, New Democrat members of Parliament representing very reliant communities asked the federal government to make it permissible for BC Ferries to apply for infrastructure funding. Ferry users in our communities have been hit very hard by skyrocketing fares originating from the semi-privatization philosophy of the provincial Liberal government in British Columbia. It is very hard on communities and on affordability. BC Ferries represents our marine highway. As the progressive opposition, New Democrats will keep pushing the Liberal government for strong, reliable, long-term investments in public transit infrastructure.

• (1235)

The throne speech promised legislation that will provide greater support for survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault. I cannot overstate how badly Nanaimo—Ladysmith needs such support. We need to prevent violence against women. So much has fallen to front-line organizations that pick up the pieces every day.

One such organization is Nanaimo's Haven Society. It fields eight distress calls every day. Every year, it serves close to 4,000 people in the region, all victims of sexual abuse, physical, emotional abuse, and violence. However, because of inadequate finances, Haven Society has to turn away 75 women every year who are ready to leave abusive relationships, but there is no shelter for them. Imagine the heartbreak of that. They simply do not have enough shelter.

Across the country, there is a powerful network of domestic violence shelters picking up the pieces. One night alone 8,000 women and children were in such shelters in our country. Another night that same year, shelters turned away more than 500 women and children for lack of space.

I acknowledge the personal commitment of the Minister of Status of Women across the aisle. I deeply hope that her Minister of Finance and her cabinet agree that finding solutions is vital. I salute the work of shelters and anti-violence workers across the country. I hope that we have a government that supports them and keeps the vulnerable safe.

Climate change is the challenge and threat of our time. I see it right at home with salmon struggling to spawn in drying and warming streams, like the Cowichan and Nanaimo rivers. Just at the time when we need to have more resiliency and food security, I see farmers in Cedar and Lantzville struggling with drought, in a rainforest. Like many Canadians, I am very glad that the government believes in the science of climate change, but good grief that we would even be celebrating that is a testament to this dark decade that we have just experienced.

Despite that commitment from the government, the throne speech only said that the government would provide leadership. There is no concrete action plan. There is no commitment to reducing emissions. There is no commitment to making the government accountable in law for setting targets and for meeting them. Three times, New Democrats have brought to this House just such legislation. I believe the Liberals have supported us, almost every Liberal, every time, when they were the second or the third party, so why not now.

Also, climate change should be included in environmental assessment and National Energy Board reviews, but that was not in the throne speech either. The Liberals, on campaign, promised to strengthen pipeline reviews, but so far are letting Kinder Morgan carry through with its pipeline and its tanker traffic expansion, carrying through under Harper government rules. The Liberals must live up to their commitments. It is long past time for a review process that includes climate change, that allows full cross-examination, and full public participation, that takes into account local communities, indigenous people, and climate change.

Nanaimo—Ladysmith is a centre for health care. We have many patients, families, and front-line workers that we hear from all the time. All through the campaign we heard how much they are under pressure and how much the public health care system is under pressure. I am very glad the Liberal throne speech acknowledged a commitment to reinvest in a new health accord, which the Conservative government had abandoned. However, again, there is nothing concrete.

The Address

My favourite piece that I would love to see is a commitment from the Liberal government to do everything it can to provide a family doctor for the five million Canadians who do not have one. I would love to see a quick fix to the foreign credentials program. I heard from a family in Nanaimo whose son was born and raised in Nanaimo. He went to the States to get his medical degree and wants to come home to Nanaimo to be a family doctor here, but Canada does not recognize his foreign credentials. How frustrating that is.

• (1240)

There is much work to do, much hope and much opportunity. When the economy is in trouble, it is the most vulnerable and those with the least who suffer the most. The government can and must play a direct role in reducing that inequality and New Democrats will push the Liberal government to take concrete actions to do so. Tom Mulcair and our NDP team will be standing up for such action every day in the House.

The Deputy Speaker: As a reminder to all hon. members, reference was made to the hon. member for Outremont and the hon. member for Calgary Heritage. They should be referred to by their riding names, not their given or family names. It is a practice that we need to follow and it takes a bit of time to become completely ingratiated with that habit.

Questions and comments, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

Mr. Randy Boissonnault (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the member opposite for being elected and for her comments in the House today.

How does the member opposite and her colleagues intend to work with the government to increase the quality of life for Canadians and ensure that all Canadians are provided for?

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Mr. Speaker, I recognize that Canadians want us to work together and co-operate, and New Democrats absolutely will. We campaigned on most of the same things. I have just provided a great list of things that I believe the member's colleagues also believe in, all implementable, all doable, all would benefit communities across the country, the environment, and the economy.

New Democrats and Liberals have a strong tradition of working together. We have provided some of Canada's best ideas, such as old age security, the Canada pension plan, public health care, and even the residential schools apology by the Conservatives was initiated by the NDP.

We will be constructive, co-operative and reinforcing wherever we can. Where we see that action is not being taken in a way that lives up to the commitments of the Liberal government's election promises and the throne speech, New Democrats will absolutely be standing together and holding the government to account.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the member for being elected and for her speech. It is always a pleasure to hear someone who has ideas about how we can make this country better.

I want to ask the member about the credentialing issue she raised regarding doctors. It is not actually within the jurisdiction of the

federal government to provide credentialing. It is up to each individual province as the provinces have jurisdiction over credentialing. In fact, she should be taking up this issue with the B.C. College of Physicians and Surgeons. This is one of the challenges of a federal structure.

I look forward to working with the member on these kinds of issues.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Mr. Speaker, it is a question of leadership that New Democrats have not seen the federal government take in the area of health care for a decade. I come from local government, so I know how much we need to work together in partnership, but if a federal government is setting standards, taking the lead, passing on transfer funding with some strings attached, and encouraging provincial governments to do the right thing, let alone the doctors associations in each province, that provides the opportunity to change the tone.

• (1245)

Mr. James Maloney (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the member opposite for her speech and thank her for all of the kind words about the throne speech. I am not clear, having listened to her, whether she will or will not be supporting the throne speech.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Mr. Speaker, there is a lot to support in the throne speech, there is no question, but as we hear leaders say every day, including the leader of the Assembly of First Nations today, words are easy, actions are hard. We have a decade of lost leadership to make up and actions are our focus on this side of the House.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her very interesting speech. She clearly cares very much about her riding.

The member mentioned problems with drought in wetlands. Could she say more about how climate change is affecting her riding and could she tell us how people are concerned about these issues?

[*English*]

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Mr. Speaker, we are already living in a community in Nanaimo—Ladysmith with very wet winters and very dry summers. It is a Mediterranean climate. It has an extremely sensitive ecology that has resulted from that long-term weather system. Whether we are seeing a change in invasive species or in the viability of what kinds of vegetables grow well, we are also seeing real pressure on our salmon stocks and on all of the commercial fisheries, which have traditionally been a part of our region.

We have also been very reliant on forestry and the threat of forest fires and the pressure on firefighters in our region is extreme. I was very pleased to stand, with New Democrat colleagues throughout the campaign, with firefighters for a climate change and natural disaster response framework that would ensure that when we do have extreme waves of forest fires and extreme drought, we are prepared as communities for such eventualities.

The Address

[*Translation*]

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to take a few moments to thank the people of Berthier—Maskinongé for putting their faith in me for a second term. I also want to thank my family, who supported me during the longest election campaign in history, all the volunteers who helped out, and all the candidates who put their names forward in the last election. That is commendable.

I want to talk a little bit about the riding of Berthier—Maskinongé, which has changed a bit since the last Parliament. I represent three RCMs: the D'Au-tray, Maskinongé and Matawinie RCMs. Matawinie includes Saint-Jean-de-Matha, Saint-Félix-de-Valois et Saint-Damien. I represent 37 municipalities. It is one of the most beautiful ridings in Canada, and I am very proud of that.

My speech today will be about the throne speech, which contained a number of positive points for the people of Berthier-Maskinongé. First, the government spoke about renewing the nation-to-nation relationship. It is important to adopt all of the recommendations made by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, and I am pleased that there is finally going to be a national inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women.

It is particularly important to point that out today, given the report that was issued by the Human Rights Tribunal indicating that, for many years, the government has not been helping first nations or providing adequate funding. It was very important for the government to mention help for our first nations in the throne speech, but we would like more information and concrete timelines.

The throne speech also mentioned the pension plan. After years of inaction by the Conservative government, it is important that something be done to enhance the Canada pension plan. We eagerly await real action with regard to the guaranteed income supplement in order to help lift 200,000 seniors out of poverty.

The return of the long form census was also good news. The data it provides are needed to understand the socio-economic realities of every community and for many other reasons. Infrastructure development was also mentioned, but once again, there is no real plan.

I also want to mention the change in tone this government has brought about. It advocates openness, transparency and co-operation, but here again, it has to walk the talk. It has to take meaningful action to prove that it means what it says.

Employment insurance was also mentioned in the throne speech, but once again, we do not really know what the government's plans are. We must reform our employment insurance system to ensure that all of the workers who contribute can benefit from it without undue delay.

Unfortunately, a lot was missing from what was a very short throne speech. It laid out a vision but did not say anything about timelines or concrete measures. I am optimistic about what is to come, but the throne speech did not mention the regions, such as Berthier—Maskinongé, and I think they bear mentioning. It is also important to help the less fortunate and the elderly.

I am honoured to be the agriculture and agri-food critic, but the throne speech made no mention of that sector, not a word. I am therefore eager to work with the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, his parliamentary secretary and my Conservative opposition colleague.

We know that small businesses create 80% of Canadian jobs.

● (1250)

Regional economies depend on our SMEs and the farming community. Improving infrastructure is therefore extremely important.

During the election campaign and over the past four years, there was a lot of talk about access to high-speed Internet. That is very important in the regions, and yet hundreds of municipalities still do not have access. This is important to the development of SMEs and to people who are self-employed. This also helps keep young people in the regions and helps draw people there. I would have liked to see that in the throne speech, but there was no mention of it.

The government made some promises regarding Canada Post and home mail delivery. However, we do not yet know if it plans to restore that service. I cannot help but wonder whether the government understands the importance of home delivery for our seniors.

In the previous Parliament, my colleague from Trois-Rivières and I worked hard to make sure that all members of the House were aware of the issues facing the victims of pyrrhotite in Mauricie. Unfortunately, we were not able to get any support, money, or help for those victims from the Conservative government, but we are confident that this government will offer some support.

Pyrrhotite is a mineral found in concrete in some 2,000 homes in Mauricie. This mineral causes the concrete to crack. As a result, the value of the affected homes has dropped by 40%. The homeowners have to raise their homes to have the foundation rebuilt.

On May 30, 2015, a march was held in Trois-Rivières. Roughly 3,000 people attended this non-partisan march to urge the government to provide funding.

Michèle Comtois and Denis Beauvilliers, who live in the Lac-à-la-Tortue area, had this to say about the pyrrhotite crisis:

...the federal government has a lifeline that it must quickly throw to those who are drowning in this crisis.

These people are really in a tough spot. The provincial government has released some funding for them, but the federal government has never done anything.

Some people have proposed some ideas. I get a lot of emails with suggestions on what we can do. For example, a constituent from Saint-Étienne-des-Grès proposes a tax credit. I have quite a few ideas and I hope to work with the Liberal government to get help for the victims of pyrrhotite.

The Address

I have already mentioned that I am the deputy critic for agriculture and agri-food for my party. Last year, Quebec lost 250 farms. The Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement is striking fear into our producers. We need clarification with respect to the compensation that the Conservative government announced. We are unsure about what the Liberal government is going to do about this issue.

The problem of milk proteins is another important issue that hopefully can be resolved quickly. At present, medium-sized producers are losing about \$50,000 a year. If the government would just tell us when it will take action on this matter, and what it is going to do, I believe that many producers in Quebec and Canada would be relieved. I wanted to explore these important issues.

I also want to bring up another important matter. Every newspaper is reporting on food prices. Naturally, we cannot control what happens to the dollar. However, a plan could be put in place to ensure that the poorest Canadians have access to food. I would like the Liberal government to introduce a strategy to ensure that Canadians will have access to fresh food. I have a number of articles that indicate that the price of these foods will increase by another 4%.

• (1255)

I hope to work with the Liberal Party, and also with my Conservative colleagues, in order to benefit Canadians.

Mr. Nick Whalen (St. John's East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for her comments and I congratulate her on her election.

She talked about what is not in the throne speech. However, does she support what is in it? Will she vote in favour of the Speech from the Throne?

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question and congratulate him on getting elected.

The throne speech was between 10 and 15 minutes long and contained a number of positive points. Once again, it needs to be fleshed out a little. We do not know exactly what direction the government is taking, and we do not know the timelines.

We need more detailed information from the current government. So far, things have been positive. I agree with almost all of the points raised in the throne speech. Members of the NDP know that they will work with the government. It is important to go further and make sure that the promises are kept. These cannot just be empty promises. Real action needs to be taken. I look forward to the government doing just that.

• (1300)

[English]

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on her re-election to the House and also on her appointment as deputy critic of agriculture.

I, too, come from a riding that is very rich in agriculture and has many farmers who are in the supply management industry, but also grain farmers and hog farmers alike.

The Liberal throne speech made absolutely no mention of farmers. One almost got the sense they were thrown under the bus as though maybe they were the sacrificial lamb in the throne speech. I surely hope that is not the case.

What kinds of things should the throne speech have included to support our hard-working farmers?

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau: Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on his re-election. I can honestly say that I was very surprised not to see agriculture included in the Speech from the Throne when we know that one in eight jobs is created because of agriculture. That happens all across our beautiful country.

What we saw in the letters to the minister was a responsibility for the Minister of Agriculture to create a food strategy. The New Democratic Party has looked very hard and we have consulted Canadians and farmers from across the country, and we have a wonderful food strategy, ready to go. We were the only party to have food strategy, a long-term vision, which is really important for agriculture.

I hope to work with the Minister of Agriculture and members on this side to move forward and have a long-term vision for agriculture in the next coming weeks and months.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague pointed to the concerns that we have when it comes to the new government's trade agenda. Obviously we have been very outspoken on our side in our opposition to the trans-Pacific partnership and what that would mean in job losses for Canadians. In fact, just a few days ago we heard it was estimated that 58,000 good-paying Canadian jobs would be lost as a result of the TPP, yet we do not see any concern from the government regarding that kind of information.

How important is it for her constituents and for all Canadians to see that we have a federal government that stands up for Canadian jobs?

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau: Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague from Churchill—Keewatinook Aski on her re-election. I would also like to thank her for all the amazing work she has done in the last few years in the House of Commons.

Farmers suffered losses as a result of the Canada-Europe trade deal. Now we have the trans-Pacific partnership, which was actually negotiated during the campaign. We did not even get to see the full text of it before Canadians went to vote on October 19. Now we know more of the potential job losses in manufacturing. There are going to be huge losses for a lot of farmers, especially dairy farmers and farmers who are under our supply management system. A report came out a few weeks ago that talked about how the number of farms lost in Quebec. We lost 250 farms last year in Quebec.

The Address

It is really important that the government ensures we have the best deal for Canadians and farmers. We are really hopeful and optimistic that the government will try to renegotiate. When the economy is so fragile, it is important that trade deals are the best. We hope the government will act on this because we cannot afford to lose any more jobs or farms.

• (1305)

Mr. Vance Badawey (Niagara Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to split my time with the hon. member for Yukon.

It is truly humbling to be here today in this magnificent and historic chamber. As I stand here today, I reflect on the words of a former prime minister who said:

The past is to be respected and acknowledged, but not to be worshipped. It is our future in which we will find our greatness.

By being with all members here in Parliament today, we are connected to thousands of men and women who have come before us to lead this great country. They, in fact, had a vision.

People from every region of the globe have chosen to make Canada their home, and almost 500,000 people have chosen Niagara as the place to raise their family, to start their business, to develop new technologies and new medicine, or to discover more about our galaxy. That diversity in Canada is reflected throughout this Parliament today.

As we debate the Speech from the Throne today, I think of the men and women who have stood in the House of Commons before us and debated the following: how to care for and honour our veterans after the Great War; Canada's role during the Second World War; the vision to construct the Welland Canal as an integral component of the overall St. Lawrence Seaway system, which connects Thunder Bay on through Niagara Centre to Toronto, to destinations in the wonderful province of Quebec, and on to Europe, Africa, and China; the creation of UN peacekeepers; the design of our national flag; the development of the Auto Pact; and the creation of medicare. More recently, we can look at the debates about the patriation of our Constitution and the Charter of Rights, which have allowed Canadians to fully control our destiny. I also reflect on the acid rain agreement and NAFTA, which showed how well Canada can work with our neighbours to improve our environment and create new jobs and opportunities for this, our generation.

These are just some of the thousands of issues and debates that have been held in these hallowed halls. It is now up to all of us, on both sides of the floor, who have the honour of being elected by our fellow Canadians to the 42nd Parliament, to pick up the torch that has been handed to us and hold it high. It is with this that I commit to the great people, citizens and businesses, of Niagara Centre and to everyone in Niagara, along the Great Lakes, and across our great country of Canada, that I will do my best to live up to their expectations and humbly accept this challenge to be their voice in Ottawa. I extend my sincere appreciation to the constituents within the Niagara Centre riding for placing their trust in me and allowing me to continue a tradition of public service at the federal level of government.

Niagara Centre is Canada's canal corridor riding. The Welland Canal goes through the riding and connects Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence to Lake Erie and the other Great Lakes. This feat of

international co-operation and engineering is within one day's drive of over 44% of North America's annual income and connects us as a country to markets around the world. With over 164 million metric tonnes travelling through the seaway, Niagara Centre is at the heart of an international multimodal transportation system.

As we debate the Speech from the Throne, I ask my fellow members what we, as a team here in the House, will leave for our grandchildren. In the early to mid-1900s, our predecessors stood in this chamber and decided to build the St. Lawrence Seaway. It opened to navigation in 1959, and 60 years later that investment is responsible for 100,000 Canadian jobs and injects almost \$2 billion in annual taxes into municipalities and provincial and federal governments. That was vision.

• (1310)

As Canada looks to reduce our economic dependence on carbon transportation, the Welland Canal within the Niagara region, within Niagara Centre, offers an alternative way to move goods throughout central North America. Shipping on the water, reducing our dependence on trucks for long-distance transportation, would result in five times lower greenhouse gas emissions, carrying the same goods the same distance as shipping on our Great Lakes. Not only would placing an emphasis on a strengthened multi-modal network help Canada reach our COP21 goals, but it could also help address Canada's infrastructure needs.

Today, Great Lakes shipping removes 7.1 million trucks from our roads and highways and saves an estimated \$4.6 billion in highway maintenance. Imagine what more we can do to grow our economy and protect our environment with smart and deliberate investments like a strengthened multi-modal network. Once again, that is vision. I remind members of this House that now it is our turn.

What will be this generation's contribution that will benefit the next generation 60 years from now? Canada's canal corridor and Niagara Centre are ready to help Canada reach its environmental goals while growing our economy. Just as Canada is diverse and has faced together, as a country, challenging times with optimism and innovation, the people of Niagara Centre are ready to face every obstacle with an inspiring determination to succeed. We are Niagara. We will help strengthen our nation's vision that will ensure Canada is a country where everyone belongs. Most important, we will in fact work hard with other members to contribute to making it happen.

The Address

Once again, I am forever thankful to the people of Niagara Centre for asking me to be their voice here in Ottawa. I want to assure them that, as economic development, infrastructure, public safety, training and education, and trade and exports are debated here in this House Commons, I will ensure that their voice is heard—whether it is advocating for a free trade zone to compete with the American free trade zone just across the border from Niagara Centre; additional infrastructure to get people to work today, in turn ensuring our vision contributes to a better Canada tomorrow; enhanced employment; retraining to help everyone adjust to the changing work reality; or reduction of interprovincial and international barriers to Niagara wine.

As I start this adventure of advocating for Niagara Centre in Ottawa, I have to thank my loving family for their continued support and their love: my wife Lisa, my daughters Logan and Jordan; and my mother and father Claudette and George. To my siblings and their families and my friends, their continued support is very much appreciated.

In conclusion, as we debate the Speech from the Throne, may we ensure we look at it through the lens of a triple bottom line mind set—social, environment, and economy—ensuring our efforts contribute to a clean environment and a strong economy for our middle class.

Although we may be on opposite sides of the House, I strongly believe that this vision will put forward the interests of those for whom we are here: future generations. Our number one priority is to satisfy those we represent, not the party we belong to; to satisfy those we represent today, while not compromising the generations of tomorrow. As we work closer together in the House to ensure our nation succeeds today, we will work together in the House to ensure our nation will walk together forever.

• (1315)

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is good to see you back in the chair and working for this Parliament in 2016.

I would also like to congratulate the new member for Niagara Centre on his election to Parliament and on his speech in which he focused heavily on the economy, which certainly in the Niagara region is very critical and reliant on trade. With respect to the member's Pierre Trudeau quote on "the past is to be respected and acknowledged", I agree.

Those trade linkages, particularly in the Niagara region—both the one with the U.S. and the NAFTA from a Conservative government of the past, our European trade agreements, the South Korea agreement, and the TPP—are very important to a trading nation like Canada. As well, our manufacturers, our wine growers, and all of those jobs in southern Ontario are attributable to them.

Would the member stand in the House and acknowledge that his government will build on these new and important markets that Conservative governments have opened up to them as part of their economic plan going forward?

Mr. Vance Badawey: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. It is a great question and something, quite frankly, that we have been discussing with our constituents from Niagara Centre and

those from different sectors, such as the auto sector, trade unions, and of course, the retail and commercial sectors.

Yes, we are going to take these issues into consideration and ensure that our folks—our constituents, our business communities, not just in Niagara Centre but throughout the entire province and our country—are heard and responded to accordingly to ensure that we as a country open up global markets for them to trade in, making our business community and the development of our economy that much more robust well into the future.

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the hon. member for Niagara Centre on his first election to this House of Commons and on his very excellent maiden speech.

I would like to ask the member, in his role as the spokesperson for his constituents in Niagara Centre, if he would be willing to participate and team up with other hon. members, including the hon. member for St. Catharines and me, in my role as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, to fight against non-tariff barriers along the St. Lawrence Seaway, which include the dumping of waste water in the seaway.

Mr. Vance Badawey: Mr. Speaker, that is a great question and I thank the member for it. It is something that we have on our agenda right now with respect to ensuring that we work with our neighbours to the south, and to this extent with the Great Lakes, being the east, to ensure that both state and federal jurisdictions on the American side do understand the barriers that are being placed currently, particularly on ballast water and the treatment of ballast water.

Here in the House, on both sides of the floor, we have to heavily advocate with our American partners to ensure that we are on a level playing field, that the regulations that currently exist here in our country are consistent with those regulations on the American side and throughout the Great Lakes for our businesses and companies that are trading through transits of those areas of jurisdiction.

The regulations should be consistent so that we are on a level playing field. Of course, as ballast water is a main focus right now, as well as other factors that are coming before us, we must take into consideration the need to constantly be on a level playing field and to be consistent throughout the entire industry.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's suggestion that we all need to work together on things like interprovincial trade barriers. One example right now is that the wine producers in Ontario can send their product into British Columbia, but not the other way around.

Will the member support us in enabling all Canadians to benefit from the wine industry, whether they are from Niagara, Nova Scotia, British Columbia, or other aspiring wine regions?

Mr. Vance Badawey: Mr. Speaker, absolutely, there is no question that we will consider any economy that can be built throughout the country.

The Address

I ask the member to give me more information, so I can help him advocate for that cause. If he could give me more information so that I can make a decision and help him along with that, I would be much obliged.

● (1320)

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was told at a meeting recently that the throne speech was a good opportunity for new MPs to get up and speak in the House and give their maiden speech, so I thought I would take advantage of the opportunity.

It is a great honour and privilege to represent the great riding of the Yukon. I am really moved by the honour of being elected by my peers, particularly in my riding, which is very diverse and politically eclectic. It was really gratifying for me to have the support of the people of the Yukon.

I have to commend my riding. We had the second-highest turnout of any riding in the country. In particular, I would like to commend the first nations people and youth of Yukon who came out in record numbers to show their commitment to democracy.

Of course, all of us have to thank our families. I thank my wife, Melissa. She is such an empathetic, understanding, and supportive spouse. I thank my 7-year-old daughter, Aurora. She is very sensitive and creative, and bilingual on top of that. She speaks a little Spanish from *Dora*. She also speaks Southern Tutchone, a first nation language from Yukon. I also thank my dynamic 4-year-old, Dawson.

Today, there are number of things in the throne speech we could speak about, but I would like to speak about the vulnerable. That is because it is often said that one grades the success and effectiveness of a country by how it treats its most vulnerable. It has always been a high priority of mine in politics. One of the main reasons I am in politics is to help those who really need it. If it is not to help them, why are we really here? The people who can deal with government on their own are not really our first priority.

Who are the vulnerable? All of us at any time in our life cycle could be one of those vulnerable. It could be all Canadians at a particular time in a particular situation in their lives. I want to talk to a few of those situations and how we are proposing to help out.

First, let us talk about seniors or elders. I am very happy that we are lending them our support. I just cannot imagine, when we look at the size of their pensions and the costs of things today that have gone up exponentially, how they survive. Many members must know seniors who have to make a choice between nutritional food and turning the heat on in their place. It is not a decision that any of us like. It is a bit hard for us in the House to understand a decision like that when we do not have to make it. We need to think about them as we make decisions in the House.

I am glad that we will index and increase the old age security supplement. The indexing would be based on a package of goods that seniors use more often than the average person, because they use particular items. It would be more sensitive indexing. Also, our government wants to increase the CPP. That has to be worked out with the provinces and territories. That is not an easy task. If that does not go ahead and the provinces go ahead on their own, I ask that they somehow make it better for seniors so they have a livable income in their final years.

I am also glad that we have offered a large increase for home care so that seniors could more happily stay in their homes. Also, we would open the discussions on the cost of drugs when they become very expensive for particular seniors.

Another vulnerable group is immigrants. In recent years there has been a gradual creeping up in the time it takes to bring in certain categories of immigrants such as spouses and grandparents.

● (1325)

I think members know how important grandparents are in their families, for them to work with kids and be friends with the kids. Can members imagine if they did not have them for five years? Even worse, can members imagine if, tomorrow, someone took their spouses away and said they could have them back in two years? Immigrants have to face such timing. It is very tough. We do not have to face those types of things, but we have to try put ourselves in their moccasins.

People can be very vulnerable when it comes to needing health care, and so I am delighted that discussions have started with the provinces to come up with ways of ameliorating that system.

EI is another area. It is hard to imagine people who have to go home one night wondering if they have to move because they do not have enough income to pay the rent or the mortgage, or they do not have enough to pay for groceries, and have to tell their children that because of this flex in their life they will have to move somewhere, but do not know where. That would be very difficult for any of us. Once again, think of those people. That is why I am glad that EI changes will be coming up, ones that are particularly important for my riding because we have such a short building and working season. It is very limited sometimes because of the number of hours a person can get in.

I think we are all sympathetic to the veterans who fought for the freedoms that we have today and want them to be treated in the best way possible. Many of them have been injured physically or mentally and, of course, we should do everything we possibly can for them. I am excited that we have promised to increase the service standards. Some of the long waits I have heard about over the years for the service they deserve are just unacceptable. I think people in the House would definitely agree with that.

Another vulnerable group these days is average Canadian, which everyone here was a couple of months ago. We know how expensive things are getting, especially for those with families. Just getting by is very difficult for some average Canadians. I am glad we have provisions for that.

The Address

Also, with respect to the poor around the world, I am glad we are looking at this issue again because there are, as we all know, some incredibly horrific situations occurring around the world that people are barely surviving, if surviving at all.

Another issue in my particular riding concerns people in rural areas, where employment is often much harder. There are very long distances to services, including medical and dental services. Not all of those services are available in rural communities, including the great rural communities of Yukon such as Dawson, Carmacks, Ross River, Teslin, Faro, Watson Lake, Haines Junction, Mayo, Carcross, Old Crow, Mount Lorne, Ibex Valley, Pelly Crossing, Burwash Landing, Beaver Creek, Marsh Lake, Tagish, Stewart Crossing, Elsa, Rancheria, West Dawson, and Keno, with its 11 residents, to name a few.

Of course, aboriginal people are very vulnerable. Their quality of life and the determinants of the quality of their lives, of course, are much lower than for other Canadians. I am delighted that there is a whole number of items that we have promised in that respect, which I will to speak to in another speech.

Moreover, of course, there are the provisions to help youth, who are obviously very vulnerable, especially financially.

Finally—and I saved the most important point for the last—is the money that we have put in for families, especially low-income families, which will take hundreds of thousands of children off the poverty level. If there is anything that I want to accomplish in this Parliament, that would be it.

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the member for Yukon, our northern neighbour, on his speech today.

He identified many areas of concern, including with regard to health. I wonder if he had an opinion on palliative care, as he has talked about many aspects of health. Does he have an opinion of and is he willing to work on the issue of palliative care?

• (1330)

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question.

In my private life I have certainly been supportive in situations related to palliative care, with the passing of my parents. As I mentioned, I am glad that we are also increasing funding in the related field of home care.

I am certainly willing to talk to the member if he has some concrete proposals to put forward. That is very important. There is also the relief for the caretakers of people in those situations.

Mr. Fin Donnelly (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the hon. member for Yukon on his re-election to the House. I welcome him back and appreciate his comments and concern touching on those communities across the country that do not get the support or attention they need and deserve.

The member talked about child poverty. We in British Columbia have the unfortunate distinction of having incredibly high child poverty rates. I share his concern to work to alleviate poverty across the country.

The member also shares my concern for having a strong and resilient Coast Guard. We have a number of stations that have been closed on the coasts, including the west coast. I am wondering if the member could speak about the reopening or intention to reopen closed bases and stations. I am thinking of Comox, Iqaluit, and other stations, even in Vancouver where the marine communications and traffic centre closed.

Does the government, through the throne speech and the impending budget, intend to focus on reopening and putting the resources needed into our Coast Guard?

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Mr. Speaker, that was an excellent question.

I apologize, I cannot answer it. Those areas are not in my riding. I am not that familiar with it. I am a big supporter of the Coast Guard. I am happy that we have talked about refurbishing the boats.

I am glad that the member raised Comox. It is related to another issue that I hope the member will support me on. There are no search and rescue planes in the northern half of Canada. People are more vulnerable, more remote, more likely to die in half an hour from hypothermia in the Far North, so why would we not move search and rescue from Comox to the north where people could be very vulnerable in emergency situations and need search and rescue? This has been a long-time priority of mine.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am also pleased to rise for the first time to welcome back my colleague from Yukon.

I did become friends with the member who represented Yukon in the 41st Parliament, but I want to pay public tribute to this member. I first worked with him when I was not in politics at all. I was executive director at the Sierra Club. As the member for Yukon, he used to pay his own travel costs to go to Washington, D.C. to help environmental groups and the Gwich'in First Nation work to stop the U.S. government from opening up what was then called the 1002 lands, the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, to oil and gas.

It was a terribly important commitment, and he took it personally. He paid for it personally. I am glad to see him back in this place.

Would he agree with me that we should make sure that the Conservation of Canada's National Parks Act be amended to take out oil and gas activities within Sable Island National Park?

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Mr. Speaker, once again, I am not entirely familiar with the details of that, but I am a big supporter of parks. I will certainly look into that and get back to the member.

The Address

Hopefully, President Obama is watching, because he has a last chance to protect the 1002 lands, to make it a park, which no other president has. That would protect the Porcupine caribou herd, an international caribou herd, and could save an entire people from cultural genocide because they cannot survive without that caribou herd. Hopefully President Obama, in his last few months, will make that decision that could save the Gwich'in people of Alaska, Yukon, and Northwest Territories.

● (1335)

The Deputy Speaker: Before we resume debate, I will provide a reminder to all hon. members. This is by no means to point to any specifics of a particular speech we have heard in the last couple of hours. There have been many good maiden speeches in the last little while. From time to time, members use the second person or “you”. In the course of speeches in the chamber, we are entrusted to use the third person in our usual language, “he”, “she”, “they”. That is done for a reason. When using that language, remarks are being addressed to the Chair. That helps to make sure that the speeches are addressed to the Chair and not persons across the aisle or other specific members.

One way for members to avoid getting into that habit is to watch for their use of the word “you”. When members see that their speeches or remarks begin to inflect the word “you”, it could be that they are slipping into that style of speech. They should think of switching back to the third person. This is a gentle reminder. It helps keep speeches less personal, more exact, and in the correct decorum that the chamber supports. I urge hon. members to do that. Again, it is not a criticism of hon. members but a habit that they should get into.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Kitchener—Conestoga.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Richmond Centre.

Today it is once again such a great honour for me to be able to rise in the House to participate in our democratic process on behalf of those who elected me from the greatest riding in all of Canada, Kitchener—Conestoga. It is with my constituents' best interests in mind that I speak to the government's Speech from the Throne.

As the MP for an urban-rural riding, I am concerned about the glaring omission of any mention of agriculture. Yes, agriculture is important to rural communities in my riding, but it is also very important to the urban communities that I represent as well. Farmers do feed cities. In my riding there are over 1,200 farms, approximately 1,400 in all of the region of Waterloo, accounting for \$473 million in gross receipts in 2010. Farmers are professionals. They want to meet their social obligations in protecting the environment, protecting the health and welfare of animals, and providing the best quality food and products for their families, for their communities, and for the world.

The family farm is the foundation of the Canada we love today. Products have evolved and technology has advanced, but one thing remains constant: from before sunrise to long after the sun goes down, Canadian farmers do the hard work that feeds our country.

The Canadian agriculture and agrifood sectors account for more than \$100 billion in economic activity every year and employ more than two million Canadians. The importance of agriculture to our national interests simply cannot be overstated. One in eight Canadian jobs depends on agriculture, those in primary agriculture, food processing, horticulture, farm markets, and more. By the way, I hope that all of my colleagues have taken the opportunity to visit the world-famous St. Jacobs farmers' market, in my riding of Kitchener—Conestoga.

Over 100 years ago in 1900, one Canadian farmer produced enough food for 10 people. Today one farmer feeds more than 120 people. These are not people the government should be ignoring when setting out its agenda for this coming session. The Liberal government should be aggressively pursuing new markets for our producers while protecting supply management. It should be investing in cutting-edge agriculture and agrifood technology; levelling the playing field for our producers, so they can better compete with trading partners; making science-based regulatory decisions; ensuring an effective and efficient transportation system; and all the while keeping taxes low for these producers and processors.

Our party has always placed high value on our agricultural sector and we will continue to do so while in opposition. Unfortunately, in three months since the election, we have already seen enough inaction on this and a number of other files to make Canadians uneasy about the future.

In terms of the economy and taxes and deficits, our leader said it best in her reply to the throne speech when she said, “We trust Canadians and the money they work so hard for is better left in their own pockets than in the hands of politicians here”. The constituents in my riding would prefer to invest and spend their own hard-earned money rather than have government determine how they can or cannot spend it.

Three topics I would like to focus on in this section are trade, the government's commitment to lowering the TFSA limit, and its promise to run a large deficit to increase infrastructure funding.

First, on trade, I am very happy to hear the Liberal government has signed the trans-Pacific partnership deal. However, the government needs to ratify the TPP at the earliest opportunity as it is in the best interests of all Canadians. The TPP would provide access to new markets with which we do not currently have free trade agreements, such as Japan, the world's third-largest economy. Ratifying the TPP would preserve Canada's privileged access to our largest trading partner, the United States, and would strengthen our partnership under NAFTA.

Ratifying this deal is especially important to our agriculture sector and again I am thinking of Waterloo region farmers. The TPP would allow these hard-working farmers preferential market access to products from great Canadian beef and pork to sweet Canadian maple syrup. By the way, Kitchener—Conestoga is home to the Elmira Maple Syrup Festival, which is the world's largest one-day maple syrup festival, and it will be held on April 2 this year.

The Address

By generating opportunities for Canadian agriculture and agrifood exports, the TPP would protect and create jobs and enhance economic opportunities and financial security for Canadian businesses and workers and their families in all regions of Canada.

● (1340)

As it relates to the tax-free savings accounts, the Conservative Party is proud of our introduction of TFSA that encouraged Canadians to be responsible in saving for their own future needs. A few days following the Speech from the Throne, my office received a phone call from a senior who begged and pleaded that I, along with my office, do everything that we can in order to ensure the Liberal government does not reduce the limit that she can contribute to her primary source of saving. This woman, by the way, was not someone who had a large income, contrary to what the Liberal government would like Canadians to believe. Many Canadians have come to rely on these savings accounts when planning for their future. These negative changes proposed will make life less affordable for Canadians who are trying to save for their vulnerable years.

In terms of infrastructure, in December, I wrote a letter to the Prime Minister and key members of his cabinet regarding commitments he had made to infrastructure funding, specifically in my riding. During the campaign, our current Prime Minister assured that an elected Liberal government would fund a two-way, all-day, rail link to Toronto so that commuters could travel to and from the region throughout the entire day. I would urge the Liberal government not to renege on its promise as its Ontario counterparts continue to drag their heels.

As we all know full well, these projects do come at a great cost. The government made it clear in its platform that it will be taking the surplus the previous government left it and entering into a deficit. The problem is that what was once a promise to keep the deficit to \$10 billion has now ballooned to \$20 billion or possibly even \$30 billion. Every week we hear of more holes in the Liberal costing of their platform. More recently, a report from the parliamentary budget officer contradicts the Liberals' claim of a cost-neutral tax increase to Canadians. Instead, the PBO has found that it will cost the government upwards of \$100 million per year to fund these so-called tax-neutral measures. It is clear to Canadians that there is always one party that will always look out for hard-working taxpayers and that is our Conservative Party.

We heard in the Speech from the Throne a commitment to keep Canadians safe and to strengthen relationships with our allies. Conservatives have said that in order to stand shoulder to shoulder with our allies, Canada must maintain our commitment to the air combat mission against ISIS and leave our CF-18s in the fight. The Prime Minister has still not explained how pulling CF-18 fighter jets out of the fight against ISIS is helpful to our coalition partners. If Canada truly wants to strengthen our relationship with its allies, this is not the time to withdraw our CF-18s. We should be standing side by side with our allies.

The Canadian Armed Forces and the Royal Canadian Air Force have been carrying out training and air strikes successfully in the region for almost a year. The suggestion that Canada does not have the resources to do both is simply not consistent with the contributions we have already made and is a disservice to Canada's

strong record. The brave men and women of Canada's Armed Forces are always willing and able to do the heavy lifting which includes degrading and defeating ISIS, a terrorist group that is committing mass murder and unspeakable atrocities. It is clear that remaining in the coalition fight against ISIS in a combat role is therefore in the best interests of Canadians both here and abroad. It is also for the refugees that we have welcomed in our communities with open arms and hearts that we must remain in this fight. For many of them, a safe and stable homeland remains their ultimate desire. It is our job to provide that for them so that if they wish, they may return to their country of origin and live free from oppression and fear of death.

The constituents of my riding are expecting the government to work hard for all sectors of the economy. The Liberals must address what they plan to do for our farming communities. Furthermore, they expect the government to steer our Canadian economy in a time when global markets are fragile, while stewarding their hard-earned tax dollars well and maintaining the principle that we should not spend money we do not have on things we cannot afford.

Last, as many of our closest friends around the world ramp up their contribution to the fight against this barbaric group ISIS, Canadians expect that we will stand alongside our friends. Unfortunately, these have not been addressed in the Speech from the Throne.

● (1345)

It is my hope that the Liberal government will see the error of its ways and take action on behalf of our global friends, on behalf of our small and medium-sized businesses in expanding trade opportunities, and especially on behalf of our vital agriculture sector to ensure that family farms can succeed and that Canadians can continue to have access to the very highest quality food in the world.

Ms. Kim Rudd (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have been to St. Jacobs a number of times. I have family in the hon. member's riding, and it truly is a wonderful place to visit.

I come from a rural riding, and I want to talk a bit about the member's comments and ask a question about the agriculture community.

I watched over the past 10 years as supports like the agristability fund were cut and needed supports for our farmers and our agriculture communities were reduced and in some cases disappeared.

Would the member opposite work with our government to ensure our agriculture community and our farmers receive the supports they need to continue to feed our communities, and indeed our country?

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Mr. Speaker, I especially welcome my colleague back again to the great village of St. Jacobs.

The biggest difference between the Conservative Party and the Liberal Party as it relates to agriculture is that in the Conservative Party we believe farmers want to farm the land, not the mailbox.

The Address

For so many years, farmers were dependent on subsidies, top-ups and all of those kinds of programs. We invested in scientific research so farmers could produce high quality food using less pesticides, increasing their yield and providing traceability programs so if and when an unfortunate incident occurred, we could quickly address those problems.

The farmers I speak to in my area are thrilled with the investments we have made in helping farmers do their job better. They have no interest in continuing to rely on government subsidies. However, I am more than willing to work with the party opposite in improving the lives and the viability of our family farms.

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the hon. member that the funds, the money that is given to government in taxes, are intended for national programs, not politicians. One of our most precious national programs is health care.

With that in mind, today we have the pleasure of hosting representatives of the Canadian Health Coalition, and they have with some asks for the new government.

First, they would like to see a new 10-year agreement between federal government and provinces in regard to stable funding for health care. They would also like to ensure we have a national drug policy strategy, a national strategy for the care of seniors, and a 25% contribution from the federal government for health care.

Would my colleague support those asks?

• (1350)

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Mr. Speaker, for a minute I thought my colleague had forgotten that I was not part of the government right now.

However, I am proud of the investments and the initiatives that our government took on the health file. There have been many misstatements and misinformation made over the last number of years in terms of so-called health cuts. Our government increased funding to provinces at 6% per year. That certainly is not a cut.

We also committed to continue to invest going forward. I am happy to do anything we can to advance the health care of Canadians.

If members examine my record, they will see that over the last number of years I have worked hard on issues such as mental health initiatives, suicide prevention and palliative care. I certainly plan to continue those efforts as we go forward.

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague from Kitchener—Conestoga on his re-election.

Further to the member opposite talking about agriculture, I come from a very agriculture-minded riding. Certainly agriculture is a very high priority for me and the folks back home who supported me and want me to represent them here.

What kinds of things would the member have liked to have seen in the throne speech? What kinds of things were missing? Agriculture should have been mentioned in it. I would like to give him an opportunity to expand on that.

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Mr. Speaker, in fact I did touch on this during the speech, urging the Liberal government to be more aggressive in pursuing new markets, for example.

I cannot tell members the difference it makes, having the proposition of the Canada–EU free trade agreement, the Canada–Korea free trade agreement, and the TPP when it comes to exporting agricultural products like pork and beef and the high tariffs that are currently on those products. That is the kind of fight we need to see from the Liberal government in standing up for our farmers to have access new markets.

When it comes to scientific research, I alluded to this earlier in response to my colleague across the way. We have to give farmers the research tools to help them develop a higher quality of their product, whether it is livestock or field crops. Our government did that. Many of our farmers are contacting me to let me know that they have been happy with this initiative rather than having them rely on government subsidies and top-ups that are not helpful in the long run.

Hon. Alice Wong (Richmond Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to thank the voters from the Richmond Centre electoral district, who have once again placed their trust in me to be their representative. This is the third time that I have been fortunate to be elected and it is always a privilege to speak on behalf of my constituents, previously for the Richmond electoral district and today for Richmond Centre.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank my supporters and volunteers in Richmond and, most important, my husband Enoch. His encouragement, support, and sacrifice have made my endeavours in Ottawa possible.

At around 8 p.m. on election day, one of the major television networks declared my defeat and, hence, my early retirement. It took another couple of hours for Elections Canada to count the rest of the ballots and, fortunately, I am here today to talk about it.

That very evening, one of my constituents sent me a line by a famous author, Mark Twain. It states, “the report of my death was an exaggeration”. Here I am today to tell my constituents that I will be holding the Liberal government to account as part of Her Majesty’s loyal opposition.

I would like to comment on the throne speech and discuss some of the issues I have heard in my conversations with many of my constituents from Richmond Centre.

I have been assigned the role of critic for small business. In the Richmond Centre electoral district, small businesses are a huge engine of job creation. Whether it is in top-in-the-world restaurants, tourism, or import and export businesses, my riding is full of people who are either owners or employees of such businesses.

Statements by Members

International trade, especially with Pacific Rim countries, is of major economic concern to my constituents because they are right in the Pacific gateway of the nation. This is why proceeding with the trans-Pacific partnership, the TPP, and continuing to implement free trade agreements is economically beneficial. Of note was the free trade agreement that our Conservative government signed with South Korea, which will stimulate economic activity for both countries and will create jobs in the Vancouver area and across Canada.

Equally important is maintaining a low-tax burden for small businesses. The Conservative government, through Bill C-59 in the last Parliament, reduced the small business tax rate from 11% to 9%, to be phased in over the next four years. I call on the new Liberal government to maintain this prudent measure, which will strengthen the job-creating small business sector.

Let us now look at the throne speech again to see if it talked about business. How many times did we see the word “business” in the throne speech? None; zero. How many times did we see the word “employment” in the throne speech? Only once, in reference to the employment insurance system, when people receive benefits for not working, whether through losing their jobs, sickness benefits, or maternity leave.

Speaking of employment insurance, we will also be watching very carefully the impact of increased payroll taxes on small businesses, which create jobs. Increased payroll taxes represent a real cost to businesses. Lower costs will create an environment for more jobs.

The throne speech does not mention how the private sector will be supported, whether with lower taxes, a reduction in red tape, training, or other measures that will encourage job creation and economic activity.

● (1355)

Indeed, it is disturbing to see the government going in the exact opposite direction, where a large government will be causing large deficits, large deficits will accumulate large debts, and large debts will increase the interest and expenses the government will have to pay. We all know who pays the government's bills. It is the taxpayer who will be paying for these upcoming Liberal deficits. This upsets a lot of people.

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Richmond Centre will have four and a half minutes when the House next resumes business on this particular question.

We will now go to statements by members.

The hon. member for Scarborough Centre.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

PROJECT ENGAGEMENT

Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to draw the attention of the House to the great work being done in Scarborough Centre and across Toronto by Project Engagement. Project Engagement is a volunteer-based, not for profit

organization founded in 2004 by a local city councillor, Michael Thompson, and businessman, Vincent Gasparro. Their goal was to create an organization that could provide food, clothing, and other household necessities to families in need in Scarborough and across Toronto.

I am pleased to say that they have succeeded in making a real difference. This past Christmas, I was pleased to join more than 600 community volunteers preparing food hampers to help ensure more than 400 families had a better Christmas, including a warm meal and toys for the children.

Project Engagement is making a real difference in the lives of families in need. We need more projects like this across Canada.

* * *

● (1400)

BARRIE—INNISFIL

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Mr. Bruce MacGregor. Bruce is the past president of our local Conservative EDA, and after an unprecedented five terms at the helm of our local riding association, Bruce turned over the reins to Mrs. Anne Kell at our AGM held over the weekend.

Bruce has been a proud resident of Barrie for 45 years. His dedication to the EDA is only surpassed by his unwavering commitment to the greater Conservative movement.

Barrie—Innisfil can be very proud of Bruce's service to the community. We thank him from the bottom of our hearts and wish him all the best in the future. I know I speak for all members of this House when I say how important our volunteers are to our success. It is their passion, energy, and sacrifice that allow us all to serve. We could not do it without them.

I wish to thank Bruce MacGregor and his wife, Pat, as well.

* * *

CHARLIE KEAGAN

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today as we mourn the loss of Charlie Keagan. Mr. Keagan served as a councillor for the town of North Sydney in the Cape Breton regional municipality. He was also a school board representative.

Besides being an elected official and working for Marine Atlantic for 35 years, he devoted much of his time to helping many volunteer groups throughout the community. One of his crowning achievements was the work he did on revitalizing Indian Beach.

Last Saturday, my wife, Pam, and I attended a very touching funeral at St. Joseph's Church. Reverend Patrick O'Neil gave a wonderful service and over 300 people attended. Former Premier Russell MacLellan along with representatives from three levels of government were also in attendance. The Knights of Columbus and the Royal Canadian Legion, both of which Charlie was a member of, acted as an honour guard at his funeral.

Statements by Members

I ask all members to join me in showing our appreciation for Charlie's many contributions to our community.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Fin Donnelly (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a recent study by Oxfam showed that 62 of the world's richest billionaires have as much wealth as half of the world's population. Evidence of the gap between the rich and rest of us continues to grow. Income and wealth inequality is one of the biggest challenges of our time.

Instead of tackling this challenge head-on, the Liberal government is making it worse. Last week's PBO report revealed that most Canadians would not benefit at all from the Liberals' so-called middle-class tax cut.

In fact, the report confirmed that the Liberals' plan would benefit the top 30% and the richest 10% are getting the most. Like the Conservatives before them, the Liberals are increasing economic inequality.

In my riding of Port Moody—Coquitlam, constituents are feeling the financial pain of exorbitant housing costs, expensive child care, prescription drugs, and groceries. Many are struggling just to pay the bills. We in the NDP will continue to work with civil society, business, labour, community groups, and individual Canadians to advance a fairer and more prosperous Canada for all Canadian families, not just the richest few.

* * *

CRIME STOPPERS

Mr. Bill Blair (Scarborough Southwest, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise in the House today to recognize the month of January as Crime Stoppers Month.

Since first being implemented in the great city of Calgary in 1982, the Crime Stoppers program has become an invaluable crime prevention tool in over 90 communities across Canada. This program is a unique partnership between the public, the local media, and police to fulfill our shared responsibility to maintain public safety, reduce crime, and prevent victimization.

Since its inception, Crime Stoppers has helped solve over 300,000 cases and resulted in the recovery of over \$500 million of contraband property, but its greatest contribution is in the prevention of crime.

Fear is the greatest enemy of public safety, and by empowering our citizens to provide information to the police anonymously and safely, Crime Stoppers discourages criminals who rely on fear and intimidation to victimize others.

Crime Stoppers Month is an opportunity to raise awareness of this important program and to express our admiration and gratitude to the many staff and volunteers who assist our dedicated police services in keeping Canada safe.

● (1405)

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is great to be back in the House after a busy two weeks in my riding of Cariboo—Prince George.

Today I have the honour of welcoming to the House two regional leaders: Sherry Ogasawara and Tracy Calogheros.

While the Prime Minister was busy taking selfies with movie stars, I and three of my colleagues attended the B.C. premier's natural resource forum, one of the largest forums of its kind in Canada.

The forum was held in Prince George, B.C. The event was attended by over 900 leading industry professionals, provincial and municipal representatives, and indigenous leaders.

The government's absence and silence was heard loud and clear. I am greatly disappointed that not one member of the Liberal Party was present, not even the member opposite, the Minister of Natural Resources.

This is the very minister who just yesterday stood up in the House and said he was meeting with industry leaders and yet declined the invitation to attend one of the largest natural resources events in the country.

Therefore, I offer this to my colleague. While he may want us to be known for—

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Avalon.

* * *

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Mr. Ken McDonald (Avalon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I stand to recognize a special person who has spent the last 40 years providing emergency services to a rural area in my riding.

At the age of 78, Ms. Rita Pennell of Trepassey has just retired. She was a pillar of strength to those requiring emergency services, and many took comfort knowing that Ms. Pennell was either driving them to the hospital or carefully attending their needs.

Just recently, I had the privilege of visiting with Ms. Pennell at her home and listen to her many interesting stories. It became obvious that she cared for every patient as if they were her family. She was determined and made sure that anyone needing care got it. If a snowstorm was getting in her way, she had the cabinet minister's personal phone number and used it to make sure the roads were cleared.

Ms. Pennell was recently recognized by the Lieutenant Governor of Newfoundland and Labrador for her efforts. While she retired as an EMS, she remains a very active volunteer in her community and works hard to make Trepassey a great place to live.

I ask all members to join me in thanking Ms. Pennell.

*Statements by Members***LEGION OF HONOUR**

Mr. John Oliver (Oakville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to advise the House that a 92-year-old resident of Oakville, Edward James Kersey, has been awarded France's highest order, the rank of Knight of the French National Order of the Legion of Honour.

Reverend Kersey joined the Canadian Army on January 24, 1943. He came ashore at Juno Beach on July 10, 1944, and fought in battles through France, Belgium and Holland. He was with his unit in Oldenburg, Germany when the war ended. His efforts and personal bravery helped to ensure that today Canada and France are democratic and free societies.

This award attests to his courage and devotion to the ideals of liberty and peace. For this, we all owe Reverend Kersey a great debt of gratitude.

As a Knight of the Legion of Honour, he joins an international order that has been instrumental in creating a stronger, fairer and more just world.

I wish to thank and congratulate Reverend Kersey.

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[*Translation*]

PORT OF QUEBEC

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since it was founded, Quebec City has had a port that plays a vital role in its economic prosperity. The word “Quebec” means “where the river narrows”, and that is even truer today because the port of Quebec is the last inland port that can accommodate offshore vessels.

According to KPMG, the Beauport 2020 plan, which was announced in 2015 by Quebec City port authorities and supported by the previous Conservative government with \$60 million, will allow the port of Quebec to remain internationally competitive while creating nearly 3,000 new jobs in the region. It is important to note that expansion and revitalization of the port facilities are necessary to ensure the port's long-term viability.

Finally, a large part of this port is located in my riding, Beauport—Limoilou. I therefore encourage the current government to support the work being done by the Port of Quebec, particularly when it comes to this particular project. It is part of a vision for the future for Beauport—Limoilou, Quebec, and Canada.

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MIKAËL KINGSBURY

Ms. Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate a top Canadian Olympian from Deux-Montagnes, in my riding.

Last week in Val Saint-Côme, Quebec, moguls skier Mikaël Kingsbury set an all-time record when he claimed his 30th World Cup win. At 23, Mr. Kingsbury is no stranger to victory, having won a silver medal at the Sochi Olympics and four Crystal Globes in moguls.

I want to take this opportunity to commend you, Mr. Kingsbury, on your hard work and perseverance. You are an inspiration and an

example of courage and success for young athletes across the country. Let us celebrate our Canadian athletes.

Congratulations, Mr. Kingsbury.

* * *

● (1410)

[*English*]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. John Aldag (Cloverdale—Langley City, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last Monday the second Canadian infrastructure report card was released by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and partners. What that report card tells us is sobering—that fully one-third of all municipal infrastructure in Canada is in fair, poor, or very poor condition, and that figure includes much-needed transit assets.

Transit represents a significant investment for all Canadians, and we need to ensure that we allocate appropriate spending to keep Canadians moving. This is a particularly relevant issue in my region, which is in B.C.'s lower mainland, as we will be welcoming an estimated one million new residents and 600,000 new jobs by 2040. Investments in public transit not only help get people to their destinations quickly and efficiently but also support a competitive economy, a clean environment, and a higher quality of life.

I encourage all members of this House to work with other levels of government in Canada to invest in much-needed transit infrastructure, including the expansion of light rail transit to my riding of Cloverdale—Langley City.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, almost two years ago the Russian Federation illegally invaded, occupied, and annexed the internationally recognized Ukrainian territory of Crimea. The Putin regime executed the military takeover response to the Euromaidan protest by the Ukrainian people against their pro-Russian leader Victor Yanukovich. The placement of armed forces in the sovereign territory of another nation is a clear violation of international norms and laws.

The previous Conservative government was a world leader in providing economic, military, and diplomatic assistance to our Ukrainian allies.

We have made it extremely clear that, whether it takes five months or 50 years, Canada will never recognize the illegal annexation of Crimea.

Today, Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov said:

We have nothing to give... We are not holding any talks with anyone on returning Crimea.

Unfortunately, the Prime Minister wants to reward the Russian Federation by normalizing relations while the Russian regime is supplying arms and troops in the Donbass conflict in eastern Ukraine.

I am calling upon the government to maintain all sanctions against the Russian Federation and the individuals responsible for the annexation of Crimea and the invasion of the Donbass.

* * *

[*Translation*]

MYLÈNE PAQUETTE

Mr. David Lametti (LaSalle—Émard—Verdun, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in 2013, Mylène Paquette, who is from the riding of LaSalle—Émard—Verdun, became the first person to row solo across the North Atlantic Ocean from Canada to France.

Her remarkable courage and perseverance during her difficult voyage inspired other people to overcome their fears and obstacles and embrace physical activity. She became a source of pride and inspiration to many in Canada and abroad. In December, she was honoured by the Governor General of Canada.

As her MP, I congratulate Ms. Paquette, a great citizen of Verdun, Quebec, and Canada, and I invite the House of Commons to recognize her accomplishment.

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SUPPLY MANAGEMENT

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to remind the Liberal government of the importance of protecting our supply management system, particularly as it relates to the problem of milk protein coming across our borders.

As the House is well aware, we in the NDP remain firmly committed to working with farmers in order to resolve the problem of milk protein being imported from the United States, and to do so within the first 100 days. I remind the House that the Liberals also promised to take action on this.

Tomorrow will be the 100th day of the new government, and our farmers all across the country are still waiting for concrete action from the government. I hope farmers will not have to wait another 100 days. Farmers in my riding and all across the country are worried and anxious. A medium-sized farm is losing \$1,000 a week. That is completely unacceptable.

Considering all the uncertainty our farmers are experiencing because of the TPP, I call on the government to take action immediately on the milk protein issue.

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• (1415)

[*English*]

SHOOTING AT LA LOCHE

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to extend my personal condolences to the people of La Loche. The recent tragedy has broken the hearts of Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

As parents and family members, we can all easily identify with the horror and the grief of this tragedy. I think it also breaks our hearts because we all know that life in isolated northern communities

Oral Questions

can be challenging but that, unfortunately, generations of politicians have ignored the depth of those challenges.

I would like the people of La Loche, all of those touched by this tragedy, to know that all of us in this House are keeping them in our hearts and in our prayers. Indeed, the entire nation is doing so.

May God bless the people of La Loche.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT

Mrs. Alaina Lockhart (Fundy Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week, the greater community of Sussex, New Brunswick, my hometown, was devastated to learn that 430 mining jobs in the community would be lost due to market prices and production costs.

Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan will be suspending the potash mining operations indefinitely at the Picadilly mining site.

The people in Sussex have been quick to show an attitude of strength and resilience. There is a confidence and sense of hope in the value of our natural resources, the strength of our municipalities, and the tremendous skills and work ethic of our workforce.

As the member of Parliament for Fundy Royal, I am committed to supporting these workers and their families, as well as the local businesses that have been impacted.

Now, more than ever, this government's infrastructure investments will be important to provide immediate work and also to ensure that we are prepared to take advantage of future private investments that will create long-term jobs.

Every local success story that this government can support will add stability to the community and help us to retain the workforce we need for prosperity in New Brunswick.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[*English*]

AIR TRANSPORTATION

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Prime Minister for taking my advice and meeting with Mr. Coderre. This is an issue about the national economy, and it is about jobs for all Canadians.

There are actually other projects, though, that can create jobs. For example, if the Liberals would allow the expansion of the Toronto Island airport runway, Bombardier would have a big new customer for its made-in-Canada C series jets, and it would not cost a cent. Why is the Prime Minister standing in the way of aerospace jobs?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. It allows me to repeat that we took an undertaking during the last election to the people of Toronto, who care about the development of their waterfront, that we would not reopen the tripartite agreement. We have kept that promise and we are very proud of it.

*Oral Questions***NATIONAL DEFENCE**

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of National Defence said in November that Canadians need not fear ISIS, but since his comments we have had ISIS-inspired jihadist attacks in Paris; in Istanbul; in Beirut; in Jakarta, where one Canadian was killed; and in Burkina Faso, where six Canadians were murdered by terrorists.

Does the Prime Minister agree with his defence minister that ISIS is not a threat to Canadians?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I stated, the threat of ISIL is real. However, as leaders of the nation, we need to give confidence to our Canadians that our institution, our security services, will protect them. That is exactly what we are going to be doing.

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to ISIS, the Prime Minister does not back his own words on diversity with action. One of the greatest threats on the planet to cultural and religious freedom, to the rights of women, to the rights of gays and lesbians, is the Islamic State.

It is one thing to give speeches on diversity from a Swiss ski resort. It is another to fight for the people whose lives are threatened by terrorists and murderers in Iraq and Syria. How can the Prime Minister say that he cares about diversity but then leave the fight for others?

• (1420)

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in fact, with the plan we are preparing, Canada will be stronger to support our coalition to fight this terrorist group, the so-called Islamic State. We will do it with pride and courage, as Canada must do everywhere in the world when it is the time to fight terrorism.

* * *

[Translation]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are pleased to see that the Prime Minister acted on the recommendation we made yesterday and went to visit his old Liberal pal this morning. We hope that the Prime Minister talked about the economy and the pipeline project that will create 3,000 jobs and generate \$1 billion in spinoffs.

The Prime Minister is the member for Papineau, which is in Montreal. There are Quebecers in this government. Is this government committed to standing up for Quebec's economy and proposing and promoting this project, which is good for the economies of Quebec and Canada?

[English]

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will defend the economic interests of all Canadians, whether they live in Alberta, Saskatchewan, New Brunswick, Quebec, or Newfoundland.

The building of major infrastructure projects is very important to the Canadian economy as we look at ways of moving our natural

resources sustainably to tidewater. This is the message we have been giving to Canadians, regardless of the region in which they live.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, does the government realize that this project will supply both of the oil refineries that we have in Quebec? Does this government also realize that this project could help Quebec's petrochemical industry? I am talking about 70,000 good, well-paying jobs in Quebec.

Will the government commit to standing up for Quebec's economy?

[English]

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are aware of how important the natural resource sector is in Canada to creating jobs. We also know that at the moment there are particular regions in the country that are hurting because of job losses because of commodity prices, particularly in Alberta and Saskatchewan, and as my colleague has just said, also in New Brunswick. We are also aware that major projects are good for the country, but they must carry the confidence of Canadians.

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INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal issued a scathing decision confirming the systemic discrimination against first nations children and families that continues to this day.

Will the Prime Minister act immediately to right this wrong by instructing government lawyers not to appeal today's decision, and will he commit to the necessary funding in the budget so that we can begin to reverse this history of discrimination, colonialism, and racism in Canadian institutions?

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all, we want to acknowledge the decision of the tribunal today, and acknowledge the leadership and advocacy of Cindy Blackstock, the Assembly of First Nations, and indigenous peoples.

It is a 180-page document. Certainly, we will take careful reading of it, but understand and recognize, there will likely not be any reason why we would seek judicial review of this decision.

We can and must do better. We will renovate the child welfare system in this country.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, likely? There is no reason to appeal this decision.

Today as well, the environment commissioner of Canada lambasted the current regulatory system for pipelines. During the campaign, the Liberal leader made a very clear commitment to overhaul the environmental assessment process. He promised that new regulations would apply to “existing projects as well” and that the entire assessment process of current projects would have to be “redone”.

Are the Liberals going to respect that very clear promise to change the rules and make sure these assessments are redone?

• (1425)

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to answer my first question as representative of the residents of Ottawa Centre.

We are committed to rebuilding the trust of Canadians in the environmental assessment process, trust that was lost under the previous Conservative government. As part of that, we will be informing our decisions through consultations with Canadians. We will be basing our decisions on evidence and science, in consultation with indigenous people, and with input from the public. We will also be considering the impact of climate change.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister did not answer the question. Rebuilding trust begins with keeping promises.

[Translation]

That is not what was promised during the election. Not once, but twice during the election campaign the Liberal leader promised that all environmental audits and assessments of Canada's pipelines would have to be redone from scratch. It was never a question of patching up a thing or two.

Will they keep their promise and redo the environmental assessments or not?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the commitments we made as a government is to rebuild the trust of Canadians in the environmental assessment process. That is the only responsible way to bring our resources to market in the 20th century. That is what we will do.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): They are trying to change the subject again.

The promise made during the election campaign was that the environmental assessments for Kinder Morgan and energy east would be redone. The government is also backing away from that.

Another commitment made was to help those people most in need. Do my colleagues know that only one-third of Canadians are eligible for employment insurance when they lose their jobs? Conservatives failed to reduce the threshold to 360 hours.

Will the Liberals address this critical situation and guarantee access to employment insurance?

Oral Questions

[English]

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to be able to respond and indicate to the House and all Canadians that we are in an active review of employment insurance standards, and will maintain and honour our commitments during the elections.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the UN recently put out a report that found that ISIS was holding close to 3,500 people, mainly from the minority Yazidi community, in captivity as slaves. ISIS is responsible for nearly 18,000 deaths and the displacement of over three million Iraqis alone. Previous governments have acted on the United Nations responsibility to protect, yet we see no plan at all from the government to stop the genocide in Syria and Iraq.

Why is the Prime Minister outsourcing Canada's obligation to protect the innocent?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to assure my colleague that we will be doing the opposite. We will fight very strongly against the so-called Islamic State with determination for the reasons he just mentioned. We will deal in a more effective way than has been done in the past. We will work with the coalition to be sure that Canada will add to the coalition and will not duplicate. We will be strong and we will be resolute in supporting our allies.

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NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of National Defence said of our allies in a radio interview, “Of course they want to keep our CF-18s there”.

Our allies want us to leave our CF-18s in the fight against ISIS. Canadians want us to leave our fighter jets in the fight. Why are the only people who want us to stop bombing ISIS the Prime Minister and ISIS?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the most important things when dealing with a conflict like this is to get a good assessment of what is happening on the ground. As a result of the Conservatives' not having a good assessment of the situation, we can see why we are actually in this mess. That is why I am taking the time to do a thorough assessment and making sure that we get this right and that we have the appropriate capability that is going to make it more effective. I have done this in the past and will do this again.

Oral Questions

● (1430)

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Tony Clement (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is a report today that indicates that when the Prime Minister met with Vladimir Putin in Turkey they both expressed a desire to normalize relations, but that is not what we heard from the Prime Minister when he reported to Canadians in the aftermath of that meeting. Now we hear Russia's foreign minister wants Canada to ease up on its unwavering support for the people of Ukraine.

Why is the Government of Canada turning its back on the people of Ukraine? Why is the Prime Minister playing footsie with Putin?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada will always be there for Ukraine. We do not accept the interference and invasion by Russia in Ukraine. We will find the most effective way to say that to the Government of Russia.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Tony Clement (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has been reported that Bombardier was trying to do business in Iran despite the fact that Canada has strict sanctions in place.

There are legitimate reasons for these sanctions, such as threats to Israel's existence and Iran's support of terrorism.

Does Bombardier know something that the rest of Canada does not? Has the government already lifted sanctions against Iran?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is true that the United Nations has asked the countries involved to lift the sanctions imposed under the agreement to ensure that Iran does not use nuclear capabilities for military reasons.

Canada will therefore lift these sanctions, but will continue to distrust a regime that must not obtain nuclear weapons, poses a threat to human rights, and is not a friend of our allies, Israel in particular.

Therefore, we will comply with the United Nations' request with our eyes open.

[*English*]

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Iran has a long history as a bad actor in the Middle East. Iran provides military assistance to the Assad regime in Syria. Iran's supreme leader routinely threatens the destruction of Israel. Reopening our Canadian mission in Tehran would put Canadian foreign service workers at risk.

Will the government abandon plans to normalize relations with Iran and keep sanctions in place?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with the misleading approach of the former government, Canada is not in Iran. It is not good for the people of Iran, it is not good for the promotion of human rights, it is not good for our strategic interests in the region, it is not good for Israel. It is good for nobody. We will change this policy.

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have seen that Iran is very selective in the way it protects foreign diplomatic missions.

I am wondering whether the Minister of Foreign Affairs is more willing today than yesterday to explicitly condemn the incitement by Palestinian leaders for deadly attacks against Israeli civilians. I wonder whether the minister's reluctance has anything to do with his stated intention that Canada return to be an honest broker in the Middle East, a return to the discredited Liberal philosophy of moral equivalence of Palestinian terrorists and Israeli victims.

Will the minister stand today and condemn the incitement?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada has been, is, and will always be a friend of Israel. What will not happen any more is the attempt by the opposition, the Conservative Party, to make it a partisan issue in Canada.

* * *

[*Translation*]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal affirmed today what aboriginal communities have known for far too long: first nations children living on reserve receive less help than other Canadian children. The Minister of Justice did everything she could to derail the process and to deny the reality facing so many children.

Will the Minister of Justice tell us today that she will not appeal this historic decision?

This is a simple question that requires a yes or no answer.

● (1435)

[*English*]

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said, the judgment is 180 pages. We are undertaking to do our due diligence and review that decision, but I cannot anticipate anything within that decision that would cause me to file for judicial review. This is about equality. Our government is committed to equality and to taking, assisting, and working with first nations to ensure that every child has the opportunity to succeed.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the eyes of the children are on Parliament as they look to us to see how we are going to end the policies that have led to too many indigenous families broken up, too many children denied access to everything from emergency dental care to proper wheelchairs. For indigenous children in this country, this is how the system works. The government is balancing the books on children who are considered not worthy of protecting.

My question is for the President of the Treasury Board. This is a legally binding rule. What is his plan to weed out the systemic negligence that runs through all the key departments of the federal government? What is his plan for action?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question and his advocacy.

As we know, every member of this government and every minister has in their mandate letters the relationship with first nations, Inuit, and Métis people as a very serious issue. We take very seriously the absolutely devastating report of the tribunal today. All members of this government will work tirelessly to make sure to right the wrongs of the past and make sure that every indigenous child in this country has an equal start in life.

* * *

FINANCE

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary budget officer is reporting that Canadian households actually carry the highest debt load in the G7. He says this is of concern because it actually creates a situation where Canadians are more vulnerable to economic shocks, like losing their jobs. This applies to Canadian households. It also applies to our country.

Who is going to max out our country's credit cards on a spending spree? It is going to be the finance minister. Why is the government abandoning any fiscal sense in the form of common sense?

[*Translation*]

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague. The government wants to ensure that household finances remain strong and that household debt is manageable. We are obviously monitoring the household debt ratio and many other indicators. The government recently took action by requiring larger down payments, in order to address vulnerability and potential risks in the housing sector. Those are the kinds of measures that will help grow the middle class.

[*English*]

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this cannot be a situation of “do as I say, not as I do”. The Liberals are clearly saying that there is a problem with respect to Canadian household debt, but they are failing to recognize that there is going to be a real problem with our country's debt if they are going to go on with this spending spree.

One way to figure out what is going on in the country is to have finance committee pre-budget consultations, as per the mandate of a parliamentary committee. None are on the horizon.

It is a very simple question for the government. Yes or no, are we going to have a finance committee pre-budget consultation?

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to report that, with the Minister of Finance, we went from coast to coast and met with thousands of Canadians. Canadians have asked us to invest in innovation, productivity and to look at infrastructure and exports.

I am pleased to report to the House that thousands of people have also made submissions online. More than 120,000 people have interacted with us online.

Canadians want us to invest in the economy, and that is exactly what we will do for Canadians.

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are losing their jobs, they are holding back investments,

Oral Questions

and they are on the edge about their financial futures. Yet, all we hear are Liberal plans for massive spending, saying that their deficits could go as high as \$30 billion.

Could the Minister of Finance confirm that the Liberals still plan to target small business, including engineers, doctors, veterinarians, and other professionals, to finance his spending spree?

● (1440)

[*Translation*]

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I remind my hon. colleague opposite that we inherited a debt of more than 150 billion Canadian dollars from the Conservative government. We have a plan to grow the economy and we have already started. We will respect three key principles: we will keep bringing the debt-to-GDP ratio lower, we will be prudent with spending, and we will return Canada to a balanced budget by the end of our mandate. That is responsible management.

[*English*]

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we left a surplus in October 2015. Those are the words of the parliamentary budget officer.

It is clear. The Liberal plan is spend, spend, spend. The government has already gone after families, taken away income splitting, cut tax-free savings accounts and signalled that it will take away tax credits from students, apprentices, first-time homebuyers, and families with children in sports and arts program.

How is the Minister of Finance going to pay for his massive spending? Who is next on his hit list?

The Speaker: I am starting to hear noise today from more than one side. That is not a good sign. I know we would rather have no noise from no sides. If we could all co-operate, that would help. After all, this is the crucible of democracy. It is a place for vigorous debate. It is a place where ideas are tested, but the test of an idea is not how loud the applause is or whether it is a standing ovation. Nor is it whether it can withstand rude interruption. Test is time. With that, let us go.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance?

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like first to apologize. I did not see that you were rising.

The hon. colleague said there was a surplus. Actually Canadians know about the \$150 billion debt that he left us.

We have a plan to grow the economy.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]*

We started the process in December by lowering taxes for the middle class, which will benefit more than 9 million taxpayers. This is one of the measures. In the next federal budget we will also include the Canada child benefit, which will benefit nine out of ten families and will help bring hundreds of thousands of children out of poverty.

Canadians asked us to invest in the middle class and grow the economy. That is exactly what we will do.

[English]

The Speaker: As the member for St. Albert—Edmonton is a new member, there are some things not to learn from older members, members who have been here longer, and one of them is heckling. Let us try to avoid that.

The member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques.

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*[Translation]***NATURAL RESOURCES**

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the report of the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development showed that there are serious flaws in the pipeline oversight system. First of all, the contingency plans and oversight system are outdated. The report also indicated that the public was being kept in the dark, and to top it all off, the National Energy Board is not even ensuring that the conditions imposed on companies are being met.

How are Canadians supposed to have confidence in the system? When will the Liberals realize that it is going to take more than a band-aid solution to fix this completely inadequate system?

[English]

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I spoke to Commissioner Gelfand yesterday about her report, and I spoke to the chair of the National Energy Board this morning about her recommendations.

I am assured by the chair that there will be instant action. In fact, it started quite some time ago. It is the commitment of my department to monitor those actions to ensure that the commissioner's recommendations are followed completely.

• (1445)

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister might be a bit confused, because the environment commissioner's report has pointed out in black and white how flawed and in fact dangerous the current NEB process is. In more than half of the cases studied, the regulator does not even keep track of the conditions it imposes upon pipeline companies.

The Prime Minister and his MPs made explicit promises to British Columbians. Let us now see if they will actually keep them.

Will the government demand that the National Energy Board review Kinder Morgan and energy east under new and credible processes that Canadians can finally trust?

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have said that there will be a new process of transition for those projects that are currently under review by the National Energy Board. We have been saying that those principles and the transition period will be announced in a number of weeks. I can now say that it will be in a number of days.

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*[Translation]***DEMOCRATIC REFORM**

Mrs. Alexandra Mendès (Brossard—Saint-Lambert, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to making major changes to the way Parliament operates.

Can the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons update us on the initiatives that have already been undertaken and tell us about the action plan adopted by the government to implement the desired reforms?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Brossard—Saint-Lambert for her question.

As members know, I meet regularly with the opposition House leaders. I can even assure my colleagues that we are starting to become friends. Yesterday, I wrote to the chair of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs to ask him whether I could appear before the committee to share our ideas with our committee colleagues. He recently informed me that I could appear in committee as early as Thursday of this week.

I am therefore extremely confident that, with the help of our colleagues and the support of members of the House, we will be able to make Parliament more effective and achieve a better work-life balance.

* * *

*[English]***NATURAL RESOURCES**

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the minister showed that he did not know that under our Conservative government, the first Keystone pipeline was approved and built, along with the Alberta clipper, the Line 9B reversal and the anchor loop. However, under this irresponsible Liberal government, the Keystone XL pipeline was rejected with virtually no push-back, no opposition or concern from the Liberals.

However, TransCanada is not taking it lying down. In fact it is challenging the U.S. decision at NAFTA.

Will the government support this NAFTA challenge? Will it get behind it and be supportive?

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at the time the American decision was taken, the Prime Minister indicated that we regretted that decision from the government of the United States. We have also said that the decision to appeal it through a NAFTA panel is the business of the proponent and not of the Government of Canada.

Oral Questions

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, shame on the government. Previous governments have taken on NAFTA challenges, and COOL is an excellent example. The government should get behind jobs and opportunity, and get behind this challenge.

Yesterday the minister also said that the natural resources industry leaders had just come to the realization that aboriginal and environmental concerns were important. Does his arrogance know no bounds?

Energy east has done over 500 consultations since 2013. We have a minister who does not know which pipelines were built in the last four to ten years, a minister who does not understand the process, and a minister who will not get behind jobs for Canada. There is a lack of confidence in the minister already—

The Speaker: The Minister of Natural Resources.

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the confidence that really matters is the confidence of Canadians in the process that we are about to encourage.

Rather than playing politics with pipelines, rather than trying to pit one region of the country against another, we will unite Canadians who will understand that the process as we are now in transition will be a much better process than was followed by that government.

• (1450)

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Prime Minister was wrong when he said his government was working hard to create jobs. There is one important nation-building project that will create thousands of much needed, well-paying jobs across Canada. It is energy east. While the government ponders vague regulatory changes, hundreds of thousands of Canadians ponder how they will pay their bills this month.

Does the Minister of Natural Resources realize that his leveraging does not instill confidence and creates an unstable environment for the whole economy?

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have indicated that we understand the human consequence to job loss. We understand that the low commodity prices in the oil and gas sector and in potash have led to layoffs across the country, most recently in New Brunswick. We take that very seriously.

We also understand that in moving forward the best chance to create new jobs in the energy sector is to ensure that major new pipeline projects and other projects throughout the country have a regulatory process behind them that enjoys the confidence of Canadians.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Alberta attracts people from all across Canada to pursue opportunities for themselves and for their families, but hard-working Albertans are hit by this energy sector downturn the worst, including thousands of people in Lakeland. On this side, we know that impacts all sectors and all Canadians. A strong Alberta means a strong Canada.

I am proud of Alberta's world-leading energy sector. When is the Minister of Natural Resources or any of the four Alberta Liberal MPs

finally going to support Alberta's energy workers who contribute so much to Canada?

Hon. Kent Hehr (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her concern for Albertans because I, too, am concerned. The people I am talking to are actually refreshed by the new approach of this government.

We have a Prime Minister who is willing to engage with first nations people, a Prime Minister who has willingly engaged with premiers and other people on the ground to see that these projects get consensus. I suspect the member should come down to Calgary and talk to the people to whom I am talking. They are happy we are in charge.

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[Translation]

CANADA POST

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the end of home mail delivery is still making lots of people angry. The new community mailboxes are a real fiasco: the locks have frozen, they are snowed in and inaccessible, and there are security issues. There have even been incidents of mail theft. Municipalities are now demanding the legal right to be consulted.

The Prime Minister has already backed down on his promise to restore home mail delivery, but can the minister confirm that consultations will be open and accessible to the people and that they will take place across Canada?

[English]

Hon. Judy Foote (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we committed to in the election, we are going to ensure that there is an independent review of Canada Post, which will look at whether or not there should have been the installation of roadside mailboxes, which we had Canada Post put a stop to because Canadians were not happy with that initiative.

We are going to ensure that Canadians are consulted, from coast to coast. We will ensure that it is an independent task force that actually undertakes this review.

* * *

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Transportation Safety Board is reporting more derailments, runaway trains, and violations of rail safety rules, including exhausted engineers.

Following the Lac-Mégantic disaster, rail companies were required to report on potential risks, the locations, and how they are being addressed. During the election, the government promised to increase transparency, yet it is refusing to make public critical reports on risks from rail traffic.

Oral Questions

Will the minister today, in this place, commit to making public the safety risks posed by rail operations across our nation?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, rail safety is of paramount importance for this government.

Recently we took action against CP with respect to the issue of railway personnel fatigue. This is something that concerns us. There are far too many derailments occurring in this country. We have to improve rail safety.

We are going to continue to work in that direction so that municipalities across this country feel that their rail system is secure. This is an undertaking from this government.

* * *

●(1455)

THE SENATE

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, unlike the Liberals' so-called changes, the Senate needs real reform.

Instead, the Liberals have announced an unelected, unaccountable board that will be making secret recommendations for an unelected Senate. This advisory board will meet in secret and provide a non-binding short list in secret. The Prime Minister will then choose from the list, or not, in secret.

I ask the Liberals, why the secrecy?

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to announce on January 19 the appointments of the members of the Independent Advisory Board for Senate Appointments, a critical step as the government begins the process of injecting a new spirit of non-partisanship in the Senate.

The advisory board is led by the distinguished Order of Canada recipient Huguette Labelle. The advisory board consists of a chair and ad hoc members for the provinces where the vacancies exist.

We are confident that this process will lead to a less partisan and more effective Senate.

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Mr. Speaker, everything about the Senate appointment process is secret: the secret list of candidates, the secret advice that is proffered, the secretive Prime Minister, who then uses Maxwell Smart's cone of silence to make his decisions.

Last year an Angus Reid poll showed that 84% of Canadians support either Senate elections or abolition. By contrast, in the same poll, 14% support appointments.

My question for the minister is this. Does she believe all these layers of secrecy will boost that 14% support level?

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians mandated us to bring real change to the Senate, and we are doing that without opening up the Constitution.

The advisory board will be guided by public, merit-based criteria in order to identify Canadians who would make significant contributions to the work of the Senate.

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a copy of the Supreme Court ruling right here, and it does not mention secrecy or mandate or require it.

On the subject of electoral reform, the last time a government in Canada changed the electoral system without a referendum was in 1951, when British Columbia's Liberal government calculated that a preferential ballot would favour it and therefore imposed it on the province as a legally sanctioned way of rigging the 1952 election.

It did not work for the Liberals then, thank goodness. They lost the election, unexpectedly, due to voter backlash. Trying to change the system without a referendum did not work in 1951. Why do the Liberals think it will work now?

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to wish the member opposite a belated happy birthday for his yesterday.

I remind the members of the House that the conversation we will be having about this very important reform will be more complex than a simple yes or no answer. It is more complex than that.

We have a tremendous opportunity to examine a variety of ways to ensure that Canadians feel fully engaged and are able to participate in our democracy. That is why we have committed—

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Brampton East.

* * *

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Raj Grewal (Brampton East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, an overwhelming number of my constituents in Brampton East are frustrated by the processing times for family and spousal sponsorships, citizen applications, PR renewals, and visitor visas. Can the hon. Minister of Immigration please inform the House of the current processing times and reassure Canadians all across this nation that our government will reform the immigration program to ensure that it is fair, transparent, and works for all Canadians?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague is absolutely right that over the last decade the processing times for family members have mushroomed to the point where the situation right now is a mess. Even for spouses the processing time is typically two years, versus four to six months in other countries. Therefore, members will know that my very top priority as immigration minister will be to bring these processing times substantially down over the coming years.

Oral Questions

● (1500)

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Grande Prairie—Mackenzie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is one person in the House who knows something about conflict of interest and that is the Minister of Agriculture. As a matter of fact, in 2002 he was forced to resign as solicitor general because it was found that the government had funnelled money to the place in which his brother worked. At the time, it was ruled that he in fact was in breach of his obligations.

I am wondering if the minister has learned from his past mistakes. Will he stand in the House and admit that his current chief of staff is in a complete conflict of interest?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my chief of staff is extremely qualified for the job. I am proud that she has such a strong agricultural background.

I can assure my hon. colleagues in the House that from day one in my office she was subject to the Conflict of Interest Act, and she will also abide by any direction from the Ethics Commissioner.

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[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the *Kathryn Spirit* has been moored at Beauharnois in Lac Saint-Louis for four and a half years now. The people and their elected representatives are getting more and more worried about the risk of fire and vandalism because the vessel is not being monitored or maintained.

Over the past four years, I have sent 16 letters to various ministers to no avail. I have also consulted ship recycling experts and proposed solutions.

Instead of denying the problem like the Conservatives did, will the Liberals take action and move the vessel?

[English]

Hon. Hunter Tootoo (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with respect to another birthday, I am proud to rise today on the 54th birthday of the Canadian Coast Guard. I would like to take this opportunity to wish all of the dedicated women and men of the Canadian Coast Guard a happy birthday.

I want to reassure the member and the public, as I did yesterday, that at the moment the *Kathryn Spirit* is not discharging any pollutants. I have and will be working with my colleague and seatmate, the Minister of Transport, to assess the situation and we will develop plans as we move forward.

* * *

HEALTH

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I rose in the House to talk about local food issues in my riding of Toronto—Danforth. Canadians are concerned about the

negative effects of consuming high levels of sodium and trans fats in their prepared foods.

Can the hon. Minister of Health please share with the House the government's plan to eliminate trans fats and reduce sodium in processed foods?

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as my colleague the hon. member knows, I have been a family doctor and have had many patients who have suffered the devastating consequences of heart disease and stroke. Therefore, it is now my duty as Minister of Health to work with all Canadians to reduce the prevalence of these conditions. We will do so in part by reducing trans fats and reducing sodium intake. My department, Health Canada, has already introduced mandatory nutritional labelling guidelines in order to reduce trans fats and will continue to work with the food industry and all Canadians to improve the health conditions of all Canadians.

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AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government is hurting the manufacturing sector with its job-killing carbon tax, increased payroll taxes, and support for increased energy costs. It ignored the sector in its Speech from the Throne, and the Prime Minister has even been quoted as saying that Ontario needs to transition away from manufacturing.

That is unacceptable. When will the government do the right thing, quit interfering, and support the auto manufacturing industry so that it can create well-paying middle class jobs in communities like Oshawa?

Mr. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we know, the government recognizes that the automotive sector is a very important sector in Canada, employing almost half a million people. As we develop the government's innovation agenda, we will continue to work with our partners to build a stronger automotive and manufacturing sector in the country.

* * *

● (1505)

[Translation]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Ms. Monique Puzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in her report, the commissioner of the environment categorically stated the following: "the...Board did not adequately track companies' implementation of pipeline approval conditions, and...was not consistently following up on company deficiencies".

Follow-up is inconsistent. What is more, over half of all Quebecers oppose the energy east project. Under the circumstances, the Prime Minister has no choice but to step up and make a decision. Will he scrap the project or will he ignore the wishes of Quebecers?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I met with the commissioner, as did my colleague, Minister Carr.

The National Energy Board told us that it accepts the report's conclusions and is working on implementing solutions.

The Address

The Speaker: I would remind my colleagues that members must not name ministers, but rather refer only to their departments.

The hon. member for Montcalm.

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when British Columbia said no to northern gateway, everyone listened. When the Americans said no to Keystone XL, everyone listened.

However, when 82 municipalities representing four million Quebecers do their homework and say no to energy east, we are insulted, scorned and even threatened.

When will the Prime Minister take off his referee jersey and stop stalling for time? When will this government finally understand that TransCanada's pipeline is not welcome in Quebec?

[English]

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it would be interesting to compare the positions of the three parties opposite to what we are advocating, which is to consult Canadians about a process that will lead to these major projects that are important for the future of the Canadian economy, to carry the confidence of Canadians without trying to divide Canadians by sector, by region, or by politics.

* * *

[English]

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if I could get unanimous consent of the House to table some documents that were printed and released during the election. Perhaps the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance has not had a chance to read them. They are the Department of Finance fiscal updates in both official languages showing that the Conservative government left the Liberals with a surplus.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: There is no unanimous consent.

There is a point of order. The member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I think you will find this a real point of order. It comes from our Standing Orders. It is not just a small reminder, but picks up from your efforts earlier in question period to remind members. While I was at COP21, I heard great news from Parliament that there was a new spirit in this place, that there was a real consensus around no heckling, and that we could expect greater decorum.

Mr. Speaker, you said from your chair that you could hear the noise. From here, I want to remind members that Standing Order 16 and Standing Order 18 make it an offence to interrupt members when they are speaking and to be disrespectful to members. I would like to see some respect for our rules and decorum in this place, and I would do anything in my far corner to assist you, Mr. Speaker, because in the noise I could not hear members' questions and ministers' answers.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for her intervention. Whether it was a point of order is another question, but I appreciated

it very much. I appreciated her support for these efforts because I know very well that Canadians feel very strongly about this. They know that students come here regularly and see what happens in Parliament, and they want this to be a place of vigorous debate where we also show respect for one another. We all have the capacity, which most members here have shown, to restrain ourselves when there are things we do not hear.

We could also have a bit less in terms of standing ovations. That would also help.

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

• (1510)

[English]

RESUMPTION OF DEBATE ON ADDRESS IN REPLY

The House resumed consideration of the motion for an address to His Excellency the Governor General in reply to his speech at the opening of the session.

The Speaker: Resuming debate. The member for Richmond Centre has four minutes.

Hon. Alice Wong (Richmond Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will continue.

Before the interruption for statements and question period, I had talked about the impact of increasing Liberal deficits and government debts. This upsets a lot of people in Richmond Centre who, for the most part, are fiscally conservative and live within their means. For all the preaching the Liberals give to environmental sustainability, one would also hope that their financial measures would also be accountable and sustainable. However, it is evident they will not be, despite the fact that the Auditor General clearly showed that we, the former Conservative government, left our last full year in government with a surplus.

There was one other significant issue that came up during the recent election campaign, about which a huge number of my constituents talked to me, and that was the Liberal plan to legalize marijuana. Unlike any references to businesses, marijuana was mentioned in the throne speech. I will quote directly from the throne speech:

...the Government will introduce legislation...that will legalize, regulate and restrict access to marijuana.

I will plainly state for the record that many constituents in Richmond Centre, including me, are against the legalization of marijuana, and I made our policy on this matter very clear during the election. As the representative for Richmond Centre, I will be watching the government's proposed response to this very carefully.

This concludes my comments. I will close by saying that it is indeed good to be back in the House of Commons, representing my constituents and serving our great country, Canada.

The Address

• (1515)

Hon. John McKay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's concern with deficits. I do not know how strong that concern was when her government ran so many deficits, but her newfound enthusiasm for running balanced books is welcome. Certainly, as we get the economy back on its feet, we will ensure that is exactly what we will do.

My question pertains to the issue the member raised around legalization of marijuana. I want to know if the member is aware how the current policies, as they pertain to marijuana, have absolutely failed. The fact is that youth prevalence rates of marijuana today exceed 20% and, in fact, are almost double tobacco.

Would the member comment on the success we had—and I can speak to that success as a former executive director of one of the largest health organizations in the country—in going after tobacco, by regulating it, by public education, by ensuring that minors did not get it, by taking it out of the hands of young people through successful campaigns that were engaged? Has she looked at that and will she work with us in turning back all of the failure we have had and toward the success we must have in protecting young people?

Hon. Alice Wong (Richmond Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to state that it is healthier not to smoke marijuana than to smoke it. It is not healthier to make a product that has been proven to impair the intelligence of the people smoking it. Let me ask the member opposite if Liberals want to be driving on the street with somebody behind the wheel smoking tobacco or marijuana.

I also want to tell the member opposite about the many concerns that parents in my riding have told me about. Looking at the city of Vancouver alone, there are 100 illegal, very bad dispensaries for young people.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is related to the member's comments. The Conservative deficit came up today in question period, and there should be no trickery on this particular issue. When Jean Chrétien became prime minister, he inherited a multi-billion dollar deficit. When the former prime minister took over governing the country, he inherited a multi-billion dollar surplus. He turned that multi-billion dollar surplus into a multi-billion dollar deficit in two years. That took place even prior to the recession. He had a deficit in every budget since then, including the current budget. Why should the Liberal government listen to the Conservative Party when it has never really had a balanced budget or a surplus in the last 20 years?

Hon. Alice Wong: Mr. Speaker, I would like to set the record straight. It was the Martin government that cut health care and education expenses to balance the books. That is why, when the Conservatives became government, we had to increase the health and education transfer. That is the kind of record the Liberal government has had. That is the kind of so-called balanced budget it had, at the expense of school children, education, and health care. That is what the Liberals did.

• (1520)

Mr. Mark Holland (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek.

What a pleasure it is to return to Parliament on this, my fourth time, and rise again in the House.

Let me start, Mr. Speaker, by congratulating you. It has been a tremendous honour and privilege to work with you, and to see you as the Chair is very satisfying indeed. I look forward to your tenure, and I hope it is long.

I remember my first time visiting this place when I was a student from Westney Heights Public School in Ajax. I came here in Grade 8 with a student tour. I was infused by the possibility that this place represented, that people of any background or walk of life could come here and represent their home community and get the opportunity to make a difference. I am maintained by that same optimism and sense of wonder as I stand here today.

I want to say to the residents and voters of Ajax how profoundly lucky I feel and how appreciative I am of the opportunity to serve.

I also want to thank my family and, in particular, my children. Many members know already and some are just finding out that this can be a challenging life for a family. My son Braeson who is 20, my daughter Maia, and my youngest boy Riley have been phenomenal supports in my life. I am so lucky to have them. I am blessed and deeply appreciative to have a wonderful family.

I want to thank my incredible campaign team, specifically my campaign manager Evan Wiseman, Sterling Lee, my friends from Heart & Stroke who were incredible on the campaign, Krista Orendorff, Alex Maheux, Nadia Formigoni. I also want to thank Jules Monteyne, Norma Telfer, Rhonda Evans, Sumi Shan, Surinder Kumar, Humera Khan, Jim and Liz Wiseman, Milan Kubik, Tom Thiru, Dinesh Kumar, Randy Low, Stephanie Ince, and so many others. Much work goes into the opportunity of serving.

When I look at the problems that are facing the folks who live in Ajax, and when I was presented with the opportunity over a period of 100 days, like so many members, to knock on doors and share in conversations about what was worrying them and keeping them up at night, it became evident that basically making ends meet was a major challenge for so many of them, getting the opportunity to send their kids away to school, or pay for the obligations of a mortgage. They faced these challenges but were not earning more money. They had been stuck over the last decade in the same financial circumstances. One of the reasons we have the honour of being able to serve in this place is that we spoke directly to the need of those in the middle class, and those struggling to join it, to be able to get ahead, to be able to get a bit more. That is why the throne speech talks directly about the middle-class tax cuts we intend to bring forward to help alleviate that challenge.

The Address

One of the things that was deeply concerning for residents of Ajax was their ability just to get to work. I talked to people who had commuting times of over one hour and who were frustrated with an antiquated transit system that was poorly invested in. These people just want the opportunity to get home quickly to see their families. They want to get to work and then go home to the life they want without spending so much of their time in gridlock. They understand that our plan to invest in infrastructure would mean a better life for them. It would mean more time with their families. They also understand that, with a struggling economy, the investment in infrastructure would give us an opportunity to improve our economic circumstance and get the economy rolling again. They understand that infrastructure is the best way we could invest. They saw the chronic under-investment that had been taking place in Durham specifically and the GTA more generally. They saw it as needing a change. Our plan as articulated in the throne speech speaks directly to that ambition.

I also heard a lot—and this relates directly to my opportunity to serve as parliamentary secretary—about the need to conduct the business of government differently. This was materially different in the last election and the four elections that I had run in previously, where people spoke about the tone and tenor of the debate in Ottawa, the high degree of partisanship and the visceral nature of it, the personal attacks rather than focus on matters of substance, and the need for each and every one of us to do better and to do more. For the first time I heard real concerns about the strength of our democracy, watching our parliamentary institutions—parliamentary officers whose responsibility it is to hold vigil over the institutions that keep our democracy strong—grow weak.

• (1525)

I was reminded in this place of my work with the Parliamentary Budget Officer when I was the critic for public safety and national security. I was trying to get cost estimates for bills before we voted on them, asking for something as simple as information on how much something was going to cost before we voted on it, and colleagues, we could not get that. We could not get straight answers, whether it was on corrections, jets, or any other matter. We saw that problem disintegrate, get worse and get deeper.

Our democracy is held strong, not because we are a better country, not because we know more than others, or because we are just better people. It is held strong because of the institutions that guard it. It is made strong because of the parliamentary officers who vigorously provide oversight, who ask uncomfortable questions, and shine lights in dark corners. Our democracy is held strong because of those institutions. It may seem that it serves us in the short term to allow those institutions to weaken, so that we can hold power or gain advantage, but the erosion that causes is fundamental.

As the former executive director of the Heart and Stroke Foundation, I am also deeply encouraged by the words in the throne speech to take action on preventative health. The reality is that we have for the first time a generation of young people who are really facing enormous poor health. We have had a tripling of childhood obesity in just a generation. We have a tsunami of chronic disease and illness that is going to hit this country unless we take it very seriously.

I can speak for the diseases that I represented, heart disease and stroke, and say that around 70% are preventable. Believe it or not, it is around the same for cancer. We know what we have to do. Therefore, we have initiatives like stop marketing to kids. There is over \$2 billion a year spent trying to convince our kids to eat poorly. We have the opportunity to change that and level the playing field, so that healthy food options are given fair hearing for children.

Advertisers have something called the “nag factor”. Any of us who are parents remember this when our children are so crazy for a food product, such as Sponge Bob candies or something, that they nag and nag until we finally give in. We need to change that and level that playing field.

I am also excited for the action that we are going to take in the area of smoking. Canada led the world and was one of the jurisdictions that could be counted on when it came to preventative health. For the last decade in tobacco control, we have been off the field. Our action to take on plain packaging, to ensure that marketers are not able to take advantage of that, is hugely important.

The example that we set in tobacco, and I was referencing this in my comments earlier, are instructive in the debate that we will have on marijuana. Some people want to oppose this debate as if there is not a problem today and to provide marijuana because we people want to have it, which is an absurdity. The reality is that we have a massive failure in policy as it revolves around marijuana.

Our young people are smoking marijuana at a rate of about two times that of cigarettes. Think about that. If we just set as an objective the reduction of the prevalence of marijuana to the level of cigarettes, it would be a massive achievement. It is taking something that is illegal and bringing it down to something that is legal. From a health perspective, we have a phenomenal opportunity to take the lessons of tobacco and apply them to marijuana in order to reduce prevalence, protect children, and at the same time decrease illegality.

It is an honour to return to this place. I look forward to the debates to come. As parliamentary secretary, I look forward to working with my colleagues on all sides of the House in making the institutions that make our democracy strong stronger, and the debate that will come in the days ahead.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the member on returning to the House. We are both passionate about the Durham region and I appreciated his first speech.

I was rather startled that the member would use the approach that we learn from the lessons of tobacco as we make marijuana more accessible to more Canadians. Our lessons from tobacco have been dealing with the serious health impacts that we have come to know as a society over the last 50 years. Therefore, we have made it harder, we have restricted access, and enforced more programs to stop young people from smoking. The government is about to embark on the opposite course.

The Address

If we were about to learn from the lessons of tobacco, we would not be legalizing a substance that clinical studies have shown can actually hamper brain development in young people. Why would we be making it more accessible to young people?

How can we actually not truly learn from tobacco by keeping this an illegal substance?

● (1530)

Mr. Mark Holland: Mr. Speaker, I look forward to working with the hon. member to strengthen Durham. We have a lot of good work ahead.

On the specific question he asked, the problem is that marijuana is already accessible to young people. As I said in my comments, for over 20% of young people there is a current prevalence rate of marijuana.

We can live in a pretend reality where we imagine that young people do not have access to it, where we imagine that is not the case, but the reality of the efforts for the last 10 years is a consistent increase in the prevalence rate for which this substance is smoked and utilized.

If there is an honest interest, and let us be clear about that, in actually reducing the prevalence of marijuana among young people, then the science is clear. The science is that, as it currently stands, it is far too easy for a young person to obtain the substance, that criminals do not care who they sell their product to, that the controls are utterly inadequate, and that the policies of the past have been an abject failure.

The reality is, when we look at where tobacco was, there was a prevalence rate of almost 50%. The policies around restriction, around ensuring young people did not have access, around going after public health campaigns to ensure that people understood the dangers of the substance they were dealing with, allowed that prevalence rate to be pulled from over 50% down to 9% for youth. That is pretty instructive.

If we set as an objective the reduction of the prevalence rate of marijuana to the prevalence rate of smoking, as a near-term target, and I do not suggest that is an end, then we would have accomplished much, but what has been accomplished to date is nothing but failure. If we want to make real change, let us do it.

Mr. Arnold Chan (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise and congratulate my friend from Ajax on his return to the House. In my particular case, when I refer to him as my friend, indeed he really is a friend of mine that I have known for two decades. I would never have imagined at the time that I would have the opportunity to serve with my friend in this particular place. I really do look forward to working with him to further the issues that he described specifically in his speech.

There are a number of topics that the member for Ajax raised on which I could ask questions, but I have a very specific one, and of course it actually affects the region that we ultimately represent. Although I am not from Durham, I represent an area just a little bit to the west of him in Scarborough.

I would like to know whether he thinks that particular projects or aspects within our platform that talk about infrastructure would make

a material difference to his particular residence in Ajax. Would he describe to this House what those things might actually be that we could work on collaboratively with other members of this House?

Mr. Mark Holland: Mr. Speaker, let me quickly continue the lovefest here and say to my hon. colleague that I could not have imagined a day when I would have the opportunity to rise in response to a question of his. It is a profound honour to serve with somebody who is such a good friend over such a long period of time. I look forward to serving with him for many years if we are blessed with that opportunity.

As it relates to transit, this must be our biggest priority. The transit system in Durham is woefully inadequate. Our green infrastructure needs investment. There is an enormous amount of work to be done. We are talking with our mayors. We are working with the province. We will be working with members opposite to ensure that Durham gets its fair share and we get it moving.

● (1535)

Mr. Bob Bratina (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Ajax for allowing me part of the time to have the honour and privilege of speaking to the 42nd Parliament today as the elected representative of Hamilton East—Stoney Creek.

I owe my presence here today to a small but dedicated group of volunteers who brought our message to the voters of my riding during the campaign. I am forever indebted to them and to my wife of 50 years this year for providing the kind of support that all of us in this chamber need to be successful.

Every day that I spend in Ottawa, I pass by the National War Memorial and pay silent tribute to Corporal Nathan Cirillo who was a proud member of Hamilton's Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders Regiment. On the morning of October 22, 2014, the sun was shining and everything seemed normal as I arrived at Hamilton city hall for the day's work. Within a couple of hours, our world was turned upside down at first news of the shooting, then the realization that one of our own was down and then the tragic news of Corporal Cirillo's death.

Later that day, I attended the family home with Police Chief De Caire and then began the planning for a funeral that would need to respond to the terrible sorrow that Canadians felt across the country. Chief De Caire arranged the motorcade from Ottawa while the regiment coordinated with my office and the family on the details of the visitation and ceremony.

Nathan will never know how much his sacrifice did to bring Canadians together in sorrow and in pride. I feel his presence every day on my walk to Parliament. I am proud of how our city responded and provided a humble Canadian soldier one of the most significant funerals in our country's history.

Hamilton East—Stoney Creek will, I am sure, benefit from the faith that it placed in this federal government. My colleague from Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas and I will provide positive and useful input here based on our experience in moving our city forward.

The Address

I believe many in this chamber will be surprised when I tell them what we have achieved over the past few years during my term as mayor. This connects with the throne speech and in particular the infrastructure investment portion.

Our unemployment rate trended below the Canadian and Ontario averages and when I left office it was at 5.2%. In each of the four-year term the value of new development in our city of half a million people was over \$1 billion, that is \$1 billion each year for four consecutive years.

Real estate values in Hamilton grew at the highest average percentage rate of all Canadian cities and at the same time, we actually reduced the number of Ontario works or welfare cases by significant numbers. The median household income of Hamiltonians has risen to over \$80,000, well above federal and provincial averages.

In the much beleaguered manufacturing sector, we still have more than 23,000 workers. There is hardly any industrial land left and we have a waiting list for potential customers.

We still make things in Hamilton and making things, and by that I mean manufacturing, is the real key to a sustainable economy.

One of my favourite success stories is National Steel Car which typically had a workforce of 1,000 employees and that company, during my term, had two advertised hiring bees and now employs 2,500 men and women making tank cars, grain cars and potash cars for clients all over North America.

The Port of Hamilton is one of Canada's largest industrial complexes. We are still a big steel producer, but in the last few years we have grown our agribusiness with grain handling facilities, soy processing and a brand new flour mill now being built. Canada's largest bakery, which just opened about a year ago on Hamilton Mountain, will be one of its customers.

If members have not been to downtown Hamilton recently, they may be shocked at what they see. Right across from city hall is a brand new \$80 million McMaster Health Campus which trains family doctors, offers clinical care for 16,000 people who might not otherwise have a family doctor. Within the project is Hamilton's Public Health Department which creates a brand new health delivery service model for Canadian cities. Alongside that health centre are two new hotels and several new residential high-rise buildings. Once they are all built out, they will generate well over \$1 million in new taxes for our city on about an acre of land.

● (1540)

I had the pleasure and privilege over 20 seasons to do the radio play-by-play broadcast of the Hamilton Tiger-Cats and the Toronto Argonauts, depending on which city I was working in, which allowed me to travel to every Canadian city with a CFL team, as well as a few in the United States, every year for 20 years. I watched these cities evolve. That enabled me to see Vancouver's Expo 86 and the domed stadium, Winnipeg's Forks development, Edmonton's make-over of its railway lands, Calgary's transit system, and so many other growth-related projects.

Sadly, on my return home after those road trips, I saw that my city had hardly changed at all during that time. That is what prompted me

to enter into politics, because I knew, as the Prime Minister often says, that better is always possible. Therefore, with a few key investments, we turned Hamilton around. This took place with an average tax increase over the four years of 1.3%, among the lowest in Ontario. I based my spending policy on the principles my immigrant father and thousands of others used to become successful in a new land: live within one's means, do as much as one can for oneself, and make the most of what one has.

My folks arrived in Canada just in time for the Depression, but somehow they managed and even chipped in to build, without any government grants, a cultural building, the Croatian hall, which opened in 1930. Every ethnocultural group in Hamilton could tell the same story, Serbians, Italians, Ukrainians, Poles, Hungarians, Scots, and so many others. Often at that time the down payments for newlyweds' houses came from a collection at the wedding party, but occasionally and for good reasons, they might have had to borrow a little, perhaps for home repairs, school clothes or even university tuition, because every immigrant wanted their children to have a good education.

This brings me to the throne speech, especially the infrastructure program rolled out during the campaign by the Prime Minister. There are many former mayors among us. None would disagree that our cities need help, help to renew aging infrastructure, provide affordable housing, provide sorely needed social amenities, clean up the environment, and enable the private sector to make investments in their communities to provide the jobs and economic growth that will pay back our public investments. As an example, the U.S. Steel operation is in bankruptcy. That is imperilling the pensions and benefits of thousands of our residents. Hundreds of acres of land may become available that could see commercial and industrial development with the accompanying wages and tax revenues that could provide relief for pensioners and jobs for young people. The entire country would ultimately benefit as well, but the residential taxpayers of Hamilton cannot purchase those lands and do the remediation required on their own.

The Address

The projects I mentioned that enhanced the Canadian football cities all had federal and provincial investment in infrastructure. There is a new GO train station in downtown Hamilton that has had immediate payback in terms of revenue-producing new development and growth in land values. The deal that was made was a simple one and it reflected the confidence that had been lost in Hamilton. We lost our way and I believe that we in the House have an opportunity now to change our country in the way we work together. Liberals want to approach solving Hamilton's infrastructure and social problems by bringing together all elected officials from all three levels of government. We call it team Hamilton. It worked during my term as mayor. The new stadium could not have been built without the help from the senior level of government, including many who sit across the way. Further expansion of the GO train service will accelerate by several years and expand into the Niagara Peninsula with help from a federal infrastructure funding program.

I will finish by asking my colleagues across the way to put aside the acrimony and rancour that has debased the work of Parliament on many occasions in the past. I know by my experience as mayor of Hamilton that there are good people in all areas of the chamber who have helped make historic contributions to the rebirth of my community and can do the same for all of Canada, the greatest country in the world.

Mr. David Sweet (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will put away the rancour right away and commend my colleague from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek on his maiden speech in the House and also commend him on his work as the mayor of the City of Hamilton, which was one of the best administrations I ever dealt with when I was the member of Parliament for Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale.

I want to ask my colleague a friendly question. Over the term that he was mayor, we invested in things like Maple Leaf, Canada Bread, and FibreCast, which created a renaissance in manufacturing in Hamilton. We made multiple investments in Hamilton airport; a \$200-million investment in waste water remediation in Hamilton; a \$150-million investment in Randle Reef that has proved to be a very difficult project, but work is under way now to get Hamilton off the hot spot list in the Great Lakes and ensure that the waterfront can be developed. We made multiple investments in McMaster Innovation Park, \$60 million, CANMET Materials Technology Lab, which is the first file I worked on; as well as \$10 million in McMaster Automotive Resource Centre. These are innovative research centres that will create jobs in the future, high-paying jobs, high-value jobs. We invested in social infrastructure for the Ronald McDonald House so parents can come and stay there while their kids are being looked after in McMaster hospital.

I want to ask my colleague if he would affirm that those investments were made and, while I'm asking that question, I want to reassure him that any support that he needs for Hamilton he will get from the member for Flamborough—Glanbrook.

• (1545)

Mr. Bob Bratina: Mr. Speaker, the list is actually too short. The hon. member has forgotten that it was the federal government that enabled our brand new, wonderful stadium, Tim Hortons Field, with a \$69-million investment. It is an international, multi-purpose, multi-sport facility.

Once again, we had relationship with provincial Liberals and federal Conservatives all working under the umbrella of team Hamilton. We all knew what we wanted to achieve.

Yes, I have confirmed that is a correct list, and I hope that kind of collaboration will continue in this House.

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Speech from the Throne talks about job creation, but fails to make any mention of the important role that small businesses play in this respect. Small businesses are the real job creators in our country, creating over 77% of all new private sector jobs.

I recently met with a small business owner in my riding who is worried about the ability to make ends meet.

The federal government can support small businesses by cutting their tax rate from 11% to 9%.

It is also time for stricter regulations that limit the exorbitant fees that credit card companies charge to retailers and small business owners.

Does my colleague opposite not agree that it is time the federal government act upon these priorities and take immediate steps to support small businesses?

Mr. Bob Bratina: Mr. Speaker, I know that all of us on this side of the House are concerned about the welfare of all working people and all employers. Our experience in Hamilton has been with large companies like ArcelorMittal Dofasco. The supply chain that extends from that actually creates the ability for small businesses to thrive.

When I worked in Dofasco 50 years ago, it had somewhere between 13,000 and 14,000 employees. I used to get my coffee and sandwich every morning at Muffy's, and then go into work. Through modern technology, downsizing, and the loss of manufacturing jobs, Muffy's and scores of other small businesses like that disappeared.

Without commenting directly on what we may do directly for small businesses, I would say that in a city like Hamilton, with a large industrial complex, we have to ensure that those large companies, in the automotive sector and so on, remain viable to enable the spill-down effect through the supply chain to enable those small businesses to be successful.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Pickering—Uxbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to rise in the House today for the first time as the member for Pickering—Uxbridge. I will be sharing my time today with the member for Louis—Hébert.

The Address

I had prepared my remarks for today in response to the throne speech. However, I would be remiss if I did not first acknowledge the tragic loss of one of my community members, Mr. Adam Wood, a teacher from Uxbridge who was killed in the tragic event in La Loche. In speaking with Mr. Wood's family they have asked for privacy while they mourn this tragic loss. A tragedy like this brings the community together as they support each other in this time of grief. Just this morning I read that the community has begun raising funds for the family to help with funeral costs. It gives me such pride to know I represent such a warm and caring community.

I would like to thank the Durham Regional Police Service, the hon. Minister of Public Safety and his staff, and the hon. Minister of Health for their calls of concern and support. I would also like to thank my colleague, the member who represents the community of La Loche, who I am sure is struck with grief for her own community but called to see how the Wood family was doing and showed her support for our community in this difficult time, a gesture I very much appreciated.

I am extremely proud to serve my community of Pickering—Uxbridge in the House. I could not have gotten to serve this great community without the help of friends, family, and supporters, especially my parents, who were not too sure about me getting into politics in the first place, but who have been my biggest supporters. My mom Doreen always complains about campaigning but is my best campaigner and the strength in everything that I do.

I was the youngest women ever elected to Pickering city council and over the years I have worked to become a regional councillor and deputy mayor. I was also appointed to the region's finance committee where I have learned so much that will guide me in my new role here. After spending nearly 10 years in municipal government, I was so pleased with the Speech from the Throne. It was a welcome support and acknowledgement to municipalities across the country.

During the campaign, we promised Canadians that through hope and hard work we would strengthen our economy, grow our middle class, and combat the effects of climate change. I was proud to hear our government outline these priorities and commitments in the Speech from the Throne.

Canadians provided us with a strong mandate. The Speech from the Throne leaves no Canadian behind, whether it is committing to ensure a secure retirement for our seniors, support for our veterans, more money for our middle class, or lifting nearly 300,000 children from poverty, among other priorities that I know our government is working on.

It is because of my aforementioned experience in municipal government that I am especially proud of our party's plan to strengthen the middle class and grow our economy by investing in infrastructure. In particular, the investments made in green, social, and transit infrastructure are critical to growing our economy. It is important our government provide stable, predictable, long-term funding for municipalities so they can plan informed, strategic investments, investments that relieve transit gridlock, assist the most vulnerable in our society, and employ our citizens.

Under the previous government, municipalities were constantly left in limbo, left wondering whether they would receive much needed funding. While municipalities are asked to provide 60% of all public services, they only receive approximately 9¢ of every tax dollar. Our government understands the burden placed on municipalities and is committed to partnering with them to provide the resources they need to help ensure our ambitious infrastructure commitments are successfully met. Creating long-term, stable funding is not only the right thing to do because municipalities are asking for it, it is the more financially prudent thing to do. More money for municipalities puts more money in taxpayers' pockets.

Serving the residents of Pickering—Uxbridge is a great privilege. I want to again thank them for the trust they have placed in me. I look forward to sharing their vision and their ideas for our riding and our country in our shared House of Commons.

• (1550)

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's background in municipal work. I was a mayor for a number of years as well. Infrastructure is an important topic for us.

One of the plans that I would like her to respond to is the following. When the federal government makes a plan to distribute money to a province, municipalities are then left in a different difficult position.

Would the member be supportive of the federal government's accepting applications directly from municipalities for infrastructure money rather than the latter going through a provincial government?

• (1555)

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Mr. Speaker, in fact, we certainly agree that the way applications for projects were done and the way funding was distributed by the previous government to municipalities have to change.

Applications themselves do not work. They cost municipalities more money, because they create an influx of tender processes and timing differences. Each province across this country deals with its budget at a different time. In fact, this makes it very hard for municipalities to borrow money for projects when they need to.

I am proud to come from a region where we had a AAA credit rating because of our long-term planning, but this is not always the case.

I am looking forward to, and hope we have support from across the aisle, stable funding and getting away from the application-based projects so that municipalities can plan and budget, like the rest of us do in our own homes.

Mr. Mark Holland (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague and neighbour from Pickering—Uxbridge on her maiden speech and the great job she did in stating the priorities of the government as articulated in the throne speech.

The Address

It is a tremendous privilege to be able to ask this question of someone whom I remember volunteering in my campaign office when I was first running federally, and to have then watched her successful career municipally. It is an honour to see the member here. I look forward to working with my good friend as she continues her work in the House.

I know that the member would have been exposed to the major challenges that municipalities have faced in dealing with the federal government over the last decade, in having priorities imposed on them that were often political in nature as opposed to really meeting the needs at a municipal level to drive their growth and success.

Through the priorities articulated in the throne speech, could the member talk about how she sees this new relationship with municipalities working and how she thinks it should work given her experience in municipal politics?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Mr. Speaker, I began my career in politics by volunteering for the hon. member one day. I had no idea it would lead to this.

I appreciate very much the question and the member's guidance and mentorship throughout the years. I hope I can do it justice as I now represent a piece of the riding he used to represent, which was then Ajax—Pickering.

The question of funding for municipalities and priorities is something that is critically important to me, and was a major factor in my stepping forward during the last election. It is not up to the federal government to determine the best of local priorities for municipalities. It is for us as a government to support municipalities to put forward the projects that will best suit them.

I know that in the region of Durham, transit, for example, is a major priority. How can the federal government honestly start creating transit lines from the national level? It should be supporting local priorities. That is the best way to do it. The most cost-effective way to do it is to provide stable funding so that we can ensure that municipalities have the money they need when the projects are ready—something similar to the federal gas tax funding and how it flows. That has been a successful program, something I heard through budget consultations with my municipalities, which would welcome and support it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Louis-Hébert, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pride and humility that I rise in the House today to deliver my maiden speech.

First and foremost, I want to thank the people of Louis-Hébert who placed their trust in my on October 19, 2015. I cannot imagine any greater honour than to represent my world, my constituents, here in Ottawa. I consider this quite a privilege and a source of tremendous pride. I will do all I can to be worthy of their trust and to make them proud of their MP.

During my campaign, I often said that what my riding needed was a young, hard-working, and positive alternative. There is not a lot that I can do for young people. In all likelihood, things are going to continue to slowly deteriorate. However, I intend to always remain hard-working, positive, and accessible.

I also want to take a moment to thank my team and the volunteers who helped get me here today. Although my political career is still in the very early stages, there is one thing I learned very quickly: in politics, trying to go it alone is suicide; we have to rely on help from others. I will not name everyone, lest I forget someone, but they know who they are, and I am eternally grateful to them.

However, there are two people I must mention by name. First is my mother, Lucie, who has always stood by me and supported me from my first election as grade 1 class president at École Notre-Dame-du-Sacré-Coeur to this last election campaign. Thank you, Lucie.

I also want to thank my riding president, Jean-Marie Bélanger, whose father once sat in this House, where the political son currently sits. Thank you, Jean-Marie.

During the debate on the Speech from the Throne, many of my colleagues have quite eloquently boasted about the merits, wealth, and beauty of their ridings. I have no problem believing them. Canada is a great big beautiful country. However, Louis-Hébert is no exception. We have not only the picturesque Vieux-Cap-Rouge with the magnificent Saint Félix church on the banks of the Cap Rouge River, but also the Jacques Cartier beach and the Samuel de Champlain boardwalk with their unobstructed view of the river. We also have heritage sites with a wealth of history in Sillery, including the Maison des Jésuites and Domaine Cataract, to name a few.

It is also a riding with a very vibrant economy and the home of Université Laval, the first French-language university in North America and, today, a world-renowned educational institution. In December, it became the first carbon-neutral university in Quebec.

All that aside, what distinguishes my riding is its people. They are proud and intelligent and, above all, compassionate. It is for that reason that my mother chose to move with my brother and me to Sainte-Foy when I was six months old. She knew that to raise two children on her own she would need the support of an entire community. She knew that, in her particular case, as the African saying goes, it would take a village to raise a child or two and that she could count on the people in my corner of the country. The people of Louis-Hébert made me the man I am today, and I would never have considered entering politics without them by my side.

My riding is doing relatively well, but there are still some major challenges to overcome, both within its borders and in the region in general. One of the things I intend to work on in my region is obtaining investments in optics-photonics, an area of expertise and a source of pride for my region; supporting Université Laval and the Jean-Lesage International Airport in obtaining a preclearance facility; and supporting the plan for responsible development set out by the Port of Quebec.

The Address

These are some of the challenges that I intend to work on and that I hope to be able to work on with my colleagues opposite, particularly the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent, who is here, and the members for Beauport—Limoilou, Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, Lévis—Lotbinière, and also, obviously, my friend and colleague, the member for Québec. I may have missed some.

However, there are still other challenges. There are families who are having trouble making ends meet. There are single mothers and fathers who dread the end of the month. Major investments need to be made in infrastructure, particularly public transit. We still need to make research and development a priority so that the economy in my region can become a true knowledge economy.

I got into politics because I, along with my team, strongly believed we needed a government that would take care of its people. The government needs to take care of veterans and first nations peoples, the young and old, and the economy and the environment, without pitting them against each other, as though they were mutually exclusive. I got into politics because I strongly believed that it was time to turn the page and write a new chapter in the history of Canada.

• (1600)

This government has already started writing that chapter by restoring the long form census at Statistics Canada; creating a commission of inquiry on missing or murdered indigenous women; lowering taxes for the middle class; again taking a leadership role on the environment, as we saw in Paris at COP21; unmuzzling our scientists; restoring our positive influence in the world; and moving forward with our Canada child benefit, which will bring 315,000 children out of poverty, according to the Library of Parliament.

I realize that there is still a lot of work to be done, but last December's throne speech set the stage for our country to be fair and responsible once again.

• (1605)

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. At the conclusion, he spoke of a more responsible government. When we talk about a more responsible government, it means ensuring that all pipeline projects, for example, really have public support, that is, social licence. In my constituency, the Vaudreuil-Soulanges RCM has long been demanding additional information about the energy east oil pipeline project in particular. It wants an assurance that emergency procedures will be effective. Today, we received information from the commissioner of the environment and sustainable development indicating that there were serious flaws in the handling of pipeline emergency procedures and that the monitoring conditions were not necessarily being implemented or that no follow-up was being done.

I would like to know what the Liberals plan to do to ensure that the public receives real reassurance concerning pipelines and whether they will actually ensure that the effective environmental assessment process will be reinstated in its entirety, as it was before the Conservatives eliminated it.

Mr. Joël Lightbound: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from the other side of the House for her question. Indeed, I think that

one of our commitments, during the election campaign, was to restore full credibility to the agencies responsible for environmental oversight, such as the Canadian Energy Agency. One of the associated commitments is to have unmuzzled our scientists in Canada so that they can speak freely. However, it is clear that for projects such as energy east to go ahead, we need to have, first and foremost, a very rigorous, robust environmental assessment process. One of the former government's failures is perhaps that it was unable to put forward a credible environmental entity. That is how we will go forward.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend my colleague from Louis-Hébert and congratulate him on his very interesting speech, and in particular on the well-deserved tribute to his mother.

The member made reference to a project that is very important to our political party. That project is the Quebec City airport. As we remember, it is an ongoing project. Our government and previous governments did a great deal of work. We hope that the current government will continue this work. I would like to know what game plan the member for Louis-Hébert, where the airport is located, has to ensure that we have a customs preclearance centre some day.

Mr. Joël Lightbound: Mr. Speaker, I would first like to thank my colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent for his question. I think that if there is an issue on which we can agree, this is it. The Quebec City airport has been asking for a customs preclearance centre since 2001. In 2001, a list of nine Canadian airports likely to get an American customs preclearance centre was prepared. Eight of the nine airports have received a preclearance centre, but the Quebec City airport has not. I think it is high time that we had such a centre.

What steps have I taken on this matter? I have met with Mr. Gagné, the airport's CEO, and I have meetings scheduled with, among others, an official, Mr. Rioux, who is responsible for the issue at Transport Canada.

I intend to make it clear to the Minister of Transport that a customs preclearance centre is vital to the economic development of the Quebec City region. I think it is well past time. These are the steps that I intend to take.

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will share my speaking time with my colleague from Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix.

The Liberals confirmed in the Speech from the Throne that they still believe in the old Keynesian theory that governments, this one in particular, can create wealth by spending more. However, when the government injects money into the economy, one has to ask where that money is coming from. We know it does not grow on trees.

The reality is that whenever the government takes another dollar from someone's pocket, it is a dollar that person cannot spend or invest. When that happens, public spending increases and private spending decreases, and there is no creation of wealth.

The Address

Government borrowing does the same thing. Private investors who lend their money to the government will have less money to lend to private entrepreneurs. Now, as we all know, it is entrepreneurs who create wealth, and not government spending. Public sector and government borrowing and spending increase and, unfortunately, private sector borrowing decreases at the same time. There is no wealth creation.

It is like taking a pot of water from a swimming pool with deep water and pouring it into a swimming pool with shallow water; nothing is created. Prosperity does not happen when the government spends, but rather when entrepreneurs invest. That is how to restart the economy. We have to give entrepreneurs the means to create wealth.

To do so, the government must put in place the best possible conditions so that entrepreneurs and the private sector can become more productive. Unfortunately, that is not what the Liberal government is doing. It needs to lower the taxes on individuals and entrepreneurs, reduce the regulatory burden, promote free trade, and sign free trade agreements, as our government did in the past with more than 38 countries.

Growth and progress require more economic freedom and less state intervention in the everyday lives of Canadians. Increasing public spending is not the solution to our social and economic challenges. On the contrary, it could put us into a debt spiral from which we might not be able to escape.

•(1610)

[English]

I have a few questions for my Liberal colleagues.

What if the Liberal government's economic policy is deeply flawed and does not bring us prosperity?

What if more government borrowing and spending are not the answer to our economic challenges?

What if we wake up one day and realize that the deplorable state of Canada's finances is the predictable consequence of the current government's excessive borrowing and spending?

What if the Prime Minister is wrong when he believes that the more the government spends and the more it stimulates the economy, the more its revenue will grow and the less he needs to worry about the deficit?

What if the Prime Minister is completely wrong and the budget does not balance itself?

What if the finance minister is wrong and he also makes a huge mistake by thinking we can spend our way to prosperity?

What if Canadians are right when they believe that we do not get richer when we spend money that we do not have?

What if deficits do not create wealth but harm future generations?

What if prosperity does not come from government spending but rather from entrepreneurs investing?

What if more government spending and borrowing does not act as an economic stimulus but rather as an economic sedative?

What happens if my concerns are completely unfounded? Nothing.

However, what happens if my concerns are justified and right? Nothing good.

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that the hon. member calls for deregulation and cutting taxes as the way to stimulate business that helps stimulate the economy. We had 10 years of that, and our reward for it was jobs being exported, profits being exported, and over \$600 billion in dead money sitting in corporate treasuries that has not been invested because there has not been the confidence in the Canadian economy.

Where was the private sector investments to respond to the overreliance on energy when we saw energy prices coming down and we knew what damage that would do to the Alberta economy and the ripple effect right across the country?

Instead of the ideological approach to this, what does an adequate, useful and effective type of government intervention in the economy look like, given the fact that what we had for 10 years really did not work?

•(1615)

[Translation]

Hon. Maxime Bernier: Mr. Speaker, I will give my colleague a clear answer on what this federal government should do in the future. I came back from a trip to western Canada last week, and it is true that the price of natural resources is down, but what people and business owners want is to be able to export their oil around the world. The private sector is trying to build a pipeline, which would help with these exports.

We are talking about a \$15-billion investment from the private sector, and it will not put our future generations in debt. This private-sector investment would not require any public money. It would all come from real entrepreneurs. The current government is against this project, which is absolutely shameful. This is an important project that is environmentally sound.

The government should support this project, which will create wealth and unite the country through sustainable economic development.

[English]

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite took some of the words right out of my mouth with his comments. However, the member for Beauce mentioned zero wealth creation, something about which the previous government knew a lot.

It comes down to the fact that there are two sides to government finances, things that will get the government in and out of trouble. The first is revenue and the second is spending. The member for Beauce talks a lot about the spending side, but I would like to know his attitude on the revenue side.

The Address

Both the Liberals and the Conservatives over the past two decades reduced the corporate income tax to the point where we were more than competitive in the world. Yet no money is being invested by businesses in Canada to create the wealth we want. We really need to increase that corporate income tax so Canadians can benefit.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Maxime Bernier: Mr. Speaker, what my colleague does not understand is that when the government increases taxes for businesses and entrepreneurs, it is indirectly increasing taxes on individuals and Canadians. As you know, businesses have to remain competitive, and taxes are an expense for a business owner. Business owners will either take on this expense by earning a smaller return on their investment, transfer the expense to their customers by increasing the price of their products, or transfer the expense to their employees by limiting wage increases or not giving wage increases.

As everyone here in the House knows, we are all consumers, we are all investors with our pension fund, and we are all workers. When a government increases corporate taxes, it indirectly increases taxes for individuals.

What our government did, and I am very proud of this fact, is lower personal income taxes and corporate taxes to leave more money in their pockets. These are the people who create wealth, not governments.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise today for the first time in 2016. I would like to take this opportunity to greet the constituents in my riding, Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, as well as my colleagues in the House of Commons, and wish them a rewarding and prosperous year.

I would also like to take a moment to thank the mayors and constituents of my riding, who turned out in force at the open house at my riding office in Côte-de-Beaupré. They made the day a resounding success.

It was a very cheerful day for me indeed given that my number one goal was to have my constituents feel welcome in this new riding office. The message evidently got around, since we welcomed more visitors than expected. It is important to me that folks who come to my riding office feel at home.

I would also like to take this opportunity to invite people to take part in the numerous winter activities that are slated for my riding in the near future, including the Saint-Ferréol-les-Neiges and Saint-Tite-des-Caps snow carnival, and I hope that they are able to enjoy these activities with family and friends.

Today, however, I would like to talk about what I expect from this government, which, to date, seems to have somewhat lost its way, what with all the selfies and grandstanding and, ultimately, its striking lack of compassion.

Were I forced to make a choice between a prime minister who carries on as if he were a rock star and one who genuinely stands up for Canadians' interests, I would hands-down choose the latter, perhaps less glittery, but far more effective.

The Liberals beat us over the heads, ad nauseam, in the election campaign with their plans for this and their plans for that. Three

months later, amid what amounts to fancy footwork and much hemming and hawing, we have heard talk of nothing but plans. There has been no substance, no direction, and nothing concrete.

It is not surprising, therefore, that in his Speech from the Throne on December 4, the Prime Minister delivered a speech disconcertingly scarce in detail, which left Canadians completely in the dark.

Since it came into power, this government has done nothing besides break its promises. It sold Canadians a pipe dream and left them disillusioned and disappointed. The Liberals are on a spending frenzy, and even the Minister of Finance refuses to commit to keeping the Liberal Party's election promise to run annual deficits not in excess of \$10 billion.

Just how high will the annual deficits run in order to fund the Liberal's spending spree: \$15 billion, \$20 billion, \$30 billion? We all know full well that this craziness will, once again, be at taxpayers' expense.

This confirms what many Canadians already know: the Conservative Party is the party of low taxation, spending cuts and sound fiscal management. We will keep a close eye on this government. We will be the watchdogs of the Canadian economy.

With more promises broken than kept, those that are kept have become dangerous to our national security. The very first message the Liberals sent the President of the United States was that we would withdraw the Royal Canadian Air Force's CF-18 fighter jets from the coalition against ISIS. While our allies the world over are stepping up the fight against terrorism and ISIS, Canada is stepping back.

Only six months ago, Canada held an international meeting in Quebec City to discuss the military and political aspects of the mission against ISIS. Today, we are not even welcome at the table. The proof is in the pudding: a high-level meeting to discuss air strikes was held in Paris in the presence of the United States, Germany, France, Italy, and Australia, among others. Which nation was glaringly absent? Canada. Clearly, this government can no longer expect Canadians to believe that it has not abandoned its allies in the fight against terrorism.

● (1620)

Moreover, as official opposition critic for the Canadian francophonie, I was aghast that no mention was made of Canada's francophone partners in the Speech from the Throne. Given that, at the most recent meeting of the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie in Dakar, the partners adopted a resolution concerning the fight against terrorism, I firmly believe that the Speech from the Throne was a golden opportunity to continue our commitment in this area.

The Liberals proclaim that Canada is back on the world stage. The fact of the matter is that we have been sidelined, while our allies are fighting to stand up for our common values. We should be standing beside our allies and confronting head-on the very real threat we face, particularly in the wake of the events in Paris, Beirut, and elsewhere.

The Address

The truth quickly caught up with this government last week, when the terrorist attacks in Burkina Faso and Indonesia took the lives of outstanding Canadians. The Conservative Party will continue to put pressure on the Liberals to reverse their decision and keep our CF-18s in the fight. It is no surprise that there was not a single reference in the Speech from the Throne to the fight against ISIS, which did not even warrant a mention. The silence of the Prime Minister of Canada on this scourge is deafening.

Another astonishing tidbit is that the Speech from the Throne made not one single mention of farmers or farming. The Canada we cherish today was built on the family farm. Products evolve, just like technology, but one thing remains constant: from well before sunrise to well after dark, Canadian farmers have the back-breaking job of feeding our country.

How will the government support rural Canadians when it does not even acknowledge them in the Speech from the Throne?

I am calling on the new government to continue our work by actively seeking out new markets for our farmers while at the same time protecting supply management, by investing in cutting-edge agriculture and agri-food technology, by making science-based regulatory decisions, and by ensuring that the transportation system is effective and efficient.

Our party has always given priority to farmers, and we are going to continue to do so in opposition. That much will not change. Unlike the Liberals, the Conservatives have a reputation for saying what they will do and doing what they say.

The Prime Minister once again missed a good opportunity to speak about the major issues for the future of our country. I am referring to job creation, a critical issue in my constituency and those of many Canadians. Voters are disappointed at feeling so abandoned by the government. There was no plan for job creation in the private sector and no reference to the energy and manufacturing sectors in the Speech from the Throne. The Liberals are in a hurry to promise us extremely large deficits, but they have no vision for these sectors, which generate billions of dollars of economic activity every year. The Liberals have become the leaders when it comes to double standards.

During the last election campaign, they boasted that they would review what they called partisan appointments and do things differently. Well, surprise, surprise: since the beginning of the Liberal mandate, partisan appointments abound. Recently, we learned that the Prime Minister appointed influential friends of the Liberal Party to key diplomatic posts, including ambassador to the United States and ambassador to the United Nations. The Liberals are masters of cronyism and excessive partisanship.

• (1625)

[English]

Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothesay, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague across the House for her straight-up, hard-hitting, and passionate speech about the Liberal Party and where we are going in the future.

Regarding her comment that the Conservative Party is going to be a watch dog of the Liberal Party, I respectfully ask who was watching the economy over the last 10 years. It was an economy that

had two recessions and eight straight deficits. That was a party that was handed a surplus and left us with a deficit. I do not understand the—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (1630)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Order, please. I would remind members that there is a process. If anyone wants to speak they can stand and be recognized.

Back to the hon. member for Saint John—Rothesay.

Mr. Wayne Long: Mr. Speaker, I want to remind the member that the Liberal Party ran on certain planks and platforms, one of which was to give money back to the middle class through a tax break and, most importantly, to give money back to the families that need it. The Canada child benefit would put money back into the pockets of Canadian families, which would be better for nine out of ten Canadian families.

The hon. member said that Canadians are disappointed with the Liberal Party. I would respectfully ask her what news channel she is watching, because I think Canadians are thrilled with the change to a new government and, most importantly, are thrilled with the change in the culture of government.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

During the economic crisis of 2008, the Conservatives formed the government, and Canada was one of the countries with the best outcome. We made strategic choices so that Canadians would have more money in their pockets.

You supposedly inherited something from us, but when we came to power in 2006, we inherited your dreams. It is recognized everywhere: the Liberals sell dreams. However, what money do they do that with? They do it with taxpayers' money. Where will you get that money? If you have a seed from which to grow money, give it to us. That is all we are waiting for, to have money. What you are doing now is mortgaging my grandchildren's future, and I will never let you do that.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Before continuing with questions and comments, I would like to remind members that they are to address the Chair and not other members directly.

The hon. member for Jonquière.

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

In my constituency, many workers are coming out of a three-year lockout. Unfortunately, for three years, garage employees were left out in the street by their employer. Fortunately, that was settled this week. We will soon see the garages open again, and the employees will be able to go back to work. On the other hand, since these are service jobs, many of them will not be able to resume work right away and, unfortunately, because of the Employment Insurance Act, they will not be able to get employment insurance benefits.

The Address

Does my colleague think that an independent, autonomous fund accessible to workers could help those people? Similarly, would the repeal of the employment insurance reform passed under the former government be good for those workers and help the families in my constituency of Jonquière?

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

I am pleased that a three-year lockout has been resolved. For people who work, it is good to be able to work.

With respect to employment insurance, we have always said that job creation is just as important. When we create jobs, we give people the opportunity to work. I have collected employment insurance benefits, and I can tell you that it is not always easy. I understand the situation, but sooner or later, we have to move forward and find ways to create jobs so that people can feel useful. When people create jobs—this is what I always tell the people in my riding—they need good ideas to make sure that those jobs last longer than six months, that they are long-term jobs so people can work. That is how people earn a living.

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Order, please. It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the question to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment is as follows: the hon. member for Calgary Forest Lawn, International Development.

Resuming debate, the Minister of Veterans Affairs.

• (1635)

Hon. Kent Hehr (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour and privilege for me to be here in this august House to make my comments on the Speech from the Throne.

It is also the first time for me to thank my constituents of Calgary Centre who put their trust in me, along with my colleague from Calgary Skyview, to become one of the first Liberals to be elected to the House of Commons from Calgary in 48 years. It is truly a privilege to have earned their trust and to be here to serve the people from that community going forward.

Calgary Centre is a unique place. We have a whole host of different people, different communities, and different situations that exist on the ground. We have kids in school and seniors in the later stages of their lives. We have school teachers and businessmen, and we have a great many people who are doing very well and a great many who struggle in my community. It is almost a microcosm of what would be found in almost any urban centre. Many of the policies that we ran on as a party and that were identified in the throne speech really captured their imagination and the issues they were facing. In my view, the issues that Alberta and Calgary are facing at this time are well addressed in both the throne speech and in what we put forward as a party during the election.

I would like to thank numerous people in my life who helped me along the way. I would like to start with two people who have been there from the beginning, my mom and dad, Richard Hehr and Judy Hehr, two pragmatic, hard-nosed school teachers from Alberta, who taught me the value of being a public servant, of being a reasonable

human being most days, and who carried me along from my recalcitrant and lackadaisical youth to a more productive future. I thank them for being there each and every step of the way. They worked very hard on my election campaign and taught me the value of understanding the concept of equality of opportunity. Whether one is born to a wealthy family or one that struggles, one is going to get a fair shake in this country and we need government to ensure that there are strong public schools, access to health care and to universities, and that there is a social safety net if they stumble or fall, allowing the government to help them get up and get on their way.

I have been fortunate enough to represent a constituency that I was born in. I live 17 blocks from the hospital that I was born in. My parents were there from day one and door knocked harder than anyone else, and without their love and support, I definitely would not be here today.

Another person I need to recognize is my sister, Kristie Smith. Although she is two years younger than I am, she has always been my older sister. She was more organized, a little brighter than I was, a little more competent than I was, and helped me along the way through a great many trials and tribulations. It was not always easy for her. I recognize that, and she is doing very well. Some of the joys in my life are my family, as well as her three kids, Marshall, Jackson, and Parker. They really mean a great deal to me and have helped me get here.

I can also say that it was not without a tremendous number of volunteers and people who followed me on this journey and who we worked very hard on a long campaign. They were there for the stretch, banging on doors, handing out pamphlets, telling people that I am a reasonable guy most days. I thank them for being out there and assisting me along this journey.

If we look at our campaign pledges and how these fit with Alberta and Calgary at this time, we need to look at the factors that are going on in Alberta. Some of the measures that we implement in our platform will assist in what is no doubt a difficult time.

• (1640)

We are cutting taxes for the middle class. This will allow people to have more money in their pockets that they can spend in the economy right now to help prime the pump. I am also very proud of the fact that we are going to lift more than 300,000 kids out of poverty with the introduction of our child benefit plan. These are some truly great things that will assist a family's pursuit of equality of opportunity. Some of that money will be spent in the economy as well.

On our infrastructure investments that we are going to make, one does not have to look too far. Just read *The Globe and Mail*. Virtually every economist in the land says now is the time to do it. Government has to make these investments anyway, and long-term projects will make the economy and the people more successful. There are many of those projects out there that will allow us to be more productive and allow people to work right away. Many people are out of jobs in Alberta; this will help. I think that resonated with many in the campaign.

The Address

I look forward to addressing these issues and more going forward.

I would be remiss not to mention that a large part of our economy is in oil and gas. I was born in Calgary in 1969, and I have benefited greatly from the success of that industry. It has contributed and allowed people opportunities to build their lives. It allowed us to accomplish a great many things.

I sense that we are looking at this correctly as a government, as we are seeing energy and the economy as two sides of the same coin. We are seeing that we cannot have access to markets without building a consensus. I will point out, and I think even members opposite will recognize, that they have not been overly successful in this. Since 2006, despite claiming that we were going to be an energy superpower, we have not seen our products reach tidewater. We have not seen our energy products go south in the way the former government thought was going to occur. I sense that we have a Prime Minister who is willing to engage in the Canadian energy strategy.

Mr. Speaker, I will need to split my time.

We see a Prime Minister who is willing to be involved in the Canadian energy strategy, which is something former premier Redford started and in which Premier Notley has been fully engaged. It is something that will allow us to interact with the premiers on this nation-building project.

We see that we have a Prime Minister who is committed to working with first nations and aboriginal groups, to work with our environmental community, and to see that we are getting serious on climate change.

However, I will point out that even if we get our product to tidewater, we need to have people willing to buy it. I will also point out that three years ago the European Union was within one vote of saying no to our oil. This is how serious an issue it is.

I will close by saying, look, a kid from Calgary got elected. One, that is a pretty amazing thing. Two, he wound up in national government. Three, he was named a minister of the Crown. My goodness, that is a trifecta at the horse races. As Minister of Veterans Affairs, I have been given an aggressive mandate to do things better on that file, to work closely with the Minister of National Defence, and to close the seam to see our men and women who have served this great nation find greater success, be that through employment, education, or dealing with issues of injury either physical or emotional. I am very proud to be given this responsibility.

The last thing I will close with is to thank the citizens of Calgary Centre for giving me this opportunity to, hopefully, not only work for good public policy in the long run, but to share my life with each and every one of them. It is a true joy.

•(1645)

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as deputy critic on this side of the House, I would like to preface what I am going to say by making mention of the fact that the previous minister, Erin O'Toole, was able to bring DND and Veterans Affairs Canada together to start to make it much easier for our soldiers facing injury to transition out of the service and into

civilian life. As he said, that seamlessness is so important. I look forward to working together to make sure that happens.

On that point, during the election the Liberal Party made 15 significant promises to our veterans that are going to cost significant dollars. We on this side of the House want to see those veterans get what they deserve as we grow and improve the veterans charter. At the same time, as I mentioned in my speech, vets in my area are very concerned. They told me that they heard all of these promises but they saw in the past how the Liberals behaved by cutting the national defence budget. They asked me if the Liberals became government if they would keep these promises on the backs of our men and women currently serving in the armed forces.

I would like to know what kind of costing has taken place. Has something been put forward so that we can know how these 15 promises are going to come to be?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Before we go on to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, I want to remind members that when we refer to other members in the House we are to refer to their ridings and not their names.

Hon. Kent Hehr: Mr. Speaker, the former minister responsible was moving the chains of justice forward on this file. Part of the trouble was that the previous nine and a half years had not gone so smoothly for the Conservative government. Maybe he should have been made minister a lot quicker. However, that is all grist for the mill.

As the member is aware and as she rightly pointed out, I am now the minister responsible for what is happening in our veterans affairs department. You are right. Our party made 15 specific promises to veterans. They are outlined clearly in our mandate letters. I am proud of our Prime Minister for posting them. Now you can track specifically our mandate and whether I am following through on this. This is a great move by our government. It is going to allow you to do your job better, as well as me—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I am sure it is not me you are talking about.

Hon. Kent Hehr: I am sorry about that, Mr. Speaker.

As the hon. member points out, yes, and this is a great way to have openness and transparency and allow her to do her best to keep track of progress on this file.

There are easier things to do, in this mandate letter, and there are harder things to do. We recognize that. I have a great team forming, and it has been working on implementing this aggressive agenda from day one. As the member is aware, there is a process that we must go through. We will be making an announcement shortly, and I ask her to give us some time. It has only been 100 days. I have every confidence that four years into this mandate, veterans affairs will be in a better place than it is today.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the minister on his election and his appointment. I was very moved to hear his personal story and encouraged to hear about the journey he has travelled.

On the issue around addressing poverty, which is big in Vancouver East, I wonder if the minister would agree and call on his government to bring forward a national strategy to end poverty.

The Address

There is another piece related to that and it has been highlighted through the refugee situation. The income assistance level for people is exceedingly low and this makes it very difficult for people to survive. I wonder whether or not the minister would work with his government and call on the provincial and territorial governments to increase welfare rates, so that we can effectively address the issue of poverty for all Canadians.

Hon. Kent Hehr: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has rightly pointed out that one of the issues facing the Canadian people, governments, and many around the world is inequality. We have a great many people struggling, and fewer doing very well. The concerns my colleague outlined are concerns for this government. How do we get people who are struggling further along? How do we see that provincial welfare rates ensure that people are getting adequate money to allow them to keep their hopes and dreams alive? I am not certain that is happening today. My sense is that our government is going to work on a lot of these issues. My door is always open to hearing the member's ideas, because we need to get working on these issues.

• (1650)

Mr. Colin Fraser (West Nova, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour to rise for the first time in this magnificent chamber to speak on behalf of the great people of West Nova. I am very proud to have the privilege of representing the 83,000 people who live in my riding. I sincerely thank them for the confidence they have placed in me to be their voice in this important national dialogue.

West Nova has been called a microcosm of rural Canada. From Waterville to Pubnico and in every wonderfully charming community in between, my riding boasts an incredible wealth of natural riches, industrious people, and a fascinating history. However, like other rural places in the Maritimes and across Canada, we face significant challenges: an aging population, transportation difficulties, and not enough good jobs. This is why I am so encouraged by the Speech from the Throne and the opportunity that this 42nd Parliament offers to make real change happen for all Canadians, including rural Canada and most particularly West Nova, from my perspective.

As we approach Canada's 150th birthday celebrations in 2017, it is important to recognize the story of our incredible history as a country. The Speech from the Throne clearly stated that diversity is Canada's strength, and the intersection of diversity and our history is clear in West Nova. Four founding peoples of Canada are rooted in the history of my riding. The story of western Nova Scotia is Canada's story.

[Translation]

Canada is bilingual and multicultural, and my riding, West Nova, has a rich history that deserves to be shared and recognized in that context.

Acadia was born in Port Royal, the cradle of the first francophones in North America ever since Samuel de Champlain created a settlement there in 1605. Close ties were forged between the Acadians and the Mi'kmaq as the two founding peoples intermingled.

[English]

In nearby Annapolis Royal, a royal charter was signed, creating the province of Nova Scotia in 1621. It is through this charter that Nova Scotia later received its coat of arms and flag, representing its relationship with Scotland. Following the War of American Independence, a large number of black loyalists arrived in Nova Scotia between 1783 and 1785, representing the largest group of African birth and African descent to come to Nova Scotia at any one time. It is this rich diversity—Acadian, Mi'kmaq, Métis, British, and African Canadians—that contributes to the character and vitality of West Nova.

[Translation]

The Acadian communities of Baie Sainte-Marie and Argyle possess a vitality that drives their rural economic development. For example, the Université Sainte-Anne, the only French-language post-secondary institution in Nova Scotia, makes a major contribution to the cultural and creative industries in my region.

I should also note that promoting our country's official languages is inextricably linked to promoting and creating French second language learning opportunities. That is why I support a throne speech that encourages the use of the country's official languages and commits to investing in Canada's cultural and creative industries.

[English]

Today we see that many people in West Nova have opened up their hearts to Syrian refugees, with generosity of spirit. Several communities across my riding have assisted the good people who have been welcomed, whether they be organizations like the Yarmouth Refugee Support Group or the Annapolis Royal Community Assisting Relocation, or church groups like the Digby Wesleyan or Hillgrove United Baptist Church, our communities are enriched by the part we are playing in Canada's national project on Syrian refugees. They enrich our communities and make us a stronger country.

Canada is a strong country not only because of its people, but also because of its natural riches. This is as true in West Nova as anywhere in the country. My riding is blessed with the world's finest seafood. Lobster, scallops, and haddock are fished in our waters off southwestern Nova Scotia, and the fertile lands in the Annapolis Valley have world-renowned apples, crops, and now the amazing wineries producing excellent wines. These incredible products of the highest quality depend on a clean environment that nurtures and fosters an abundance of harvest. This is the most basic example that a clean environment and a strong economy go hand in hand. We must ensure not only that these riches are enjoyed today but that the quality and bounty with which we are blessed are preserved for generations to come.

The Address

•(1655)

Also, the Bay of Fundy off our shores is a true natural wonder. With the highest tides in the world, there is vast potential for the development of new technologies that would harness the incredible tidal power and produce clean, powerful energy. Such development would spur economic activity and reduce carbon pollution in the move toward renewable and sustainable energy. Also, there is tremendous opportunity for wind power generation with a steady and consistent source on and off our coast.

Investments in such clean technologies to seize the emerging opportunities would not only help our country meet its obligations to combat climate change, it would produce lots of good jobs and further potential to export such technological innovation as well.

With our natural riches and friendly people, West Nova has unrealized potential to attract new businesses and tourists. We have many quaint towns and villages dotting our riding. I invite all Canadians to experience the hospitality and charm of one of our beautiful bed and breakfasts, or visit Kejimikujik National Park to see the vast and pristine wilderness and many lakes of the interior of Nova Scotia. Commitments to provide additional resources for our national parks is very welcomed in West Nova, especially as we look to celebrate our great outdoors as part of our national celebration in 2017.

Ensuring we have transportation links available to get people and goods in and out of our area will be key to future economic development as well. Going forward, investments in these types of infrastructure, as enunciated in the Speech from the Throne, will certainly benefit the important transportation issues and others that we have in West Nova.

The Canadian Forces Base at 14 Wing Greenwood is an exceptionally key part of West Nova, not only because of the economic benefits that it provides for our area but because we are proud of the brave men and women of the Canadian Forces and their families that live, work, and retire there. As a result, I have the good fortune of representing many veterans, not only in the valley but across West Nova, and also across generations. I am therefore fully supportive of the commitment to not only have a better equipped military, but also a government that takes care of our veterans as a first priority. Re-establishing mental health facilities, restoring lifetime pensions for injured veterans, and ensuring their families get greater support, are the right things to do.

Because of our shared history, culture, and our natural riches, the residents of West Nova enjoy a good quality of life. We want people to live, work, and raise their families there in dignity. However, as I went throughout the riding during the election campaign it became clear that far too many seniors in West Nova were finding it difficult to make ends meet and in fact were living in poverty. The commitments to seniors are very important to my constituents. They should be secure in the knowledge that their incomes on old age security and the guaranteed income supplement will keep up with the rising cost of living. After working many years Canadians deserve a dignified retirement, starting at age 65. That is why I support a plan to restore the eligibility age from 67 to 65 for the OAS and GIS. Assisting single seniors by increasing their GIS by 10% will make a

big difference in improving the quality of life for many of the good people I represent.

An aging population also means an increased strain on our local health care resources. I fully support the government's commitment to work with the provinces and territories to develop a new health accord. As demographics change so too do the challenges faced by smaller provinces like Nova Scotia to deliver reasonably comparable health care services at reasonably comparable levels of taxation. The quality of life for families in West Nova is paramount to ensuring we have thriving communities and healthy kids. The investments the government has outlined in the throne speech will go a long way to providing the help we need to ensure we have the country we want for our next generation.

Therefore, let us come together as the 42nd Parliament and be worthy of those who have gone before us in this place. Let us work together in constructive dialogue, offering different points of view on difficult matters, but doing so in a manner that respects each other and respects the decency and goodwill of the people we are elected to represent.

I look forward to working with all of my hon. colleagues and moving Canada forward in our pursuit of peace, order, and good governance.

•(1700)

Mr. Scott Simms (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague from West Nova. I call him my fellow search and rescue MP because of I have Gander as a base and he has Greenwood, and they work together to save lives on the east coast, which they do valiantly.

He is a rural MP like me. One of the major problems we have with an elderly population is that in many cases when there are surviving partners resulting from death, they live in the homes they have lived in for many years. Although they had two streams of income, old age security, now they have one. Unfortunately, bills stay the same. That is why I am proud to say that we will increase the old age security to the surviving person by 10%.

Could the member could expand on that, using illustrations from his own riding? I know has many seniors, much like my own riding.

Mr. Colin Fraser: Mr. Speaker, it is an important component of the way we will improve the lives of seniors. I have many seniors in my community, and during the campaign it was apparent to me, in talking to them and going into their homes, that they were having financial difficulties.

The Address

The commitments that have been made in our campaign platform and also enunciated in the Speech from the Throne clearly identify that assisting single seniors in particular and, as I mentioned, adding 10% to the GIS for those single seniors would go a long way in helping these folks to pay their bills.

There are other measures that are being introduced to help seniors in the future, certainly working with the provinces on extending the Canada pension plan and also ensuring that the health care system is adequately meeting the needs of those especially in rural areas where sometimes they cannot get access to the medical help they need.

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, throughout debate, many members in the House spoke about families and people in their ridings who were struggling. People in my riding of Essex are struggling as well. Unfortunately the speech failed to outline plans to fight poverty and reduce inequality in Canada. There is nothing to address the fact that the absence of federal minimum wage leaves far too many Canadians working full time, but still living below the poverty line.

A way to provide direct help to tens of thousands of families is by giving them a raise, by reinstating the \$15 an hour federal minimum wage.

Does the member opposite agree that the government needs to take a leadership role for all Canadians and provide direct help to them by giving them a raise through reinstating the federal minimum wage and raising it to \$15 an hour, and also to support workers and ensure that minimum wage workers in Canada do not fall below the poverty line?

Mr. Colin Fraser: Mr. Speaker, I respectfully disagree with the member opposite. I outlined in my speech quite clearly some of the things that were being done to help families that were struggling, including the Canada child benefit. We look at the ability that will provide to families, certainly in my riding, that are having difficulty making ends meet. It is means tested and tax free. Putting money back in the pockets of those who need it the most is an important investment that our government is committed to doing.

With regard to seniors, I clearly outlined in my speech some of the measures that were being taken to assist seniors who were living in poverty. My friend asked a question a moment ago exactly on that point.

With regard to the federal minimum wage in particular, this was an election campaign commitment by the New Democratic Party. It would affect zero people in my riding. It is not a measure that would increase the wealth of anybody in my riding or help them to make ends meet.

Certainly, discussion with the provinces about what we can do to alleviate poverty is important, such as investments in social infrastructure, ensuring people have affordable housing. These are important investments that our government is committed to doing.

• (1705)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish to inform you that I will be sharing my time with the member for Fredericton.

It is an honour for me to rise and speak to the House for this, my first real speech. First of all, I want to once again thank the people of Châteauguay—Lacolle for the trust they have placed in me.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank my family for their tremendous support, which I enjoyed even before I decided to run. Thank you to my daughter Emily and her husband Michael, my twin boys Benjamin and Daniel, my mother and father, as well as my three brothers and five sisters. We have a small family. I also warmly thank the fathers of my children, my ex-husband John and my ex-husband Bill, for their good advice and, above all, for the mutual support we have given one another over the past 30 years as parents raising our beloved children.

My life experience brought me to a place in my career in which I felt the need to transition from being a banker to a social worker. I began a mission to help Canadians better understand and better manage their financial resources.

In 2005, I came here to Ottawa on my own initiative to attend the first national conference on financial literacy, called *Canadians and Their Money: A National Symposium on Financial Capability*. The participants represented an impressive range of Canadians with the authority to define the notion of financial capability, which is defined as “a concept with three different components: financial knowledge and understanding, financial skills and competence, and financial responsibility”.

I have applied these principles, which are now recognized as being part of financial literacy, in my work presenting workshops on personal finance, and also in my work as a columnist. I have had the pleasure of taking part in various forums on the subject and developing financial education activities for all stages of life. The goal was to help people achieve what they truly wanted in life, regardless of their choices or lifestyle, and that is financial security.

[*English*]

In doing this work with Canadians from all walks of life, and in particular with vulnerable and low-income Canadians, I realize that financial education by itself cannot solve the problem of insufficient predictable monthly income for families and seniors. That is why I am delighted to see that our government has committed to implementing a tax-free Canada child benefit as of this month. That will not only benefit nine out of ten Canadian families with young children, but will effectively lift 315,000 children out of poverty, much as the guaranteed income supplement did for low-income seniors, reducing seniors poverty significantly 20 years ago.

The Address

In the same way, I applaud our government's attention to increasing the current guaranteed income supplement by 10%, and its intention to work with provinces and territories to enhance the Canada pension plan, another important source of predictable periodic income for people retired or contemplating retirement. By the way, as one of the 58ers, Canadians born in 1958 or later who were subject to that change in the OAS eligibility age from 65 to 67, I am thankful that the measure has been repealed by our government. Let us just say that my long-time retirement plan is back on schedule.

• (1710)

[*Translation*]

On another topic, I want to reiterate our government's commitment to having a strong economy in concert with a healthy environment, a highly important target for the riding of Châteauguay—Lacolle and one that generated a lot of interest throughout Montreal's south shore area.

More than 120 stakeholders took part in our pre-budget consultation in Montérégie last week, including local economic players, mayors, business people, educators, social development leaders, and the list goes on.

People almost unanimously agree that the environment must be protected in the economic development process, not only because we want a healthy environment for ourselves and our families, but also because the real Canada is back on the world stage.

We also have the opportunity to become leaders in the area of clean technologies and to export them around the world. For example, in Châteauguay—Lacolle, stakeholders in the agriculture industry want to improve integrated pest management for land. However, they need financial support and support for research on new practices.

The people of Châteauguay—Lacolle are also very proud of the Île Saint-Bernard protected area, which was purchased in 2011 by the City of Châteauguay and has been protected since then. It is one of the most beautiful wildlife areas in Quebec, and it also has a sound tourism, cultural, and educational business model. It has won several awards of excellence for its heritage efforts. This tourist attraction, which includes an ecomarket, sightseeing cruises on Lake Saint-Louis, and an archaeological site, hosts almost 180,000 visitors every year and provides 40 quality jobs.

However, we also have a serious environmental disaster in the lagoons in Mercier and Saint-Martine. These lagoons were industrial waste dumps from 1968 to 1972. The groundwater is still so contaminated that the people living along the Châteauguay River cannot even drink their own water.

Consequently, I am very relieved that our government has committed to implementing a major investment program for infrastructure, including green infrastructure. This financial participation will encourage innovation and fund the development of technologies to clean up environmental messes, such as the Mercier lagoons. I know that this will not be easy given the complexity of the problem, but we can and must do better.

In fact, just like President Kennedy did in the United States when he created NASA, our government has given us an opportunity to come up with and carry out major projects under its green infrastructure program, the purpose of which is to protect and revitalize our environment in a sustainable manner for our future generations.

[*English*]

Finally, in recognition of the many anniversaries we are celebrating this year, such as the 175 years since the elections of Robert Baldwin and Sir Louis-Hippolyte LaFontaine, partners in achieving responsible government, and the 150-year anniversary of Confederation next year, I would like to close with a quote, slightly amended from one of our honourable predecessors here in this House, my personal hero, Irish immigrant and great statesman, Thomas D'Arcy McGee.

In 1860, seven years before Confederation and eight years before he was tragically murdered by a Fenian on his way home after a late-night debate here in Parliament, Thomas D'Arcy McGee said:

I look to the future of my adopted country with hope [...] I see in the not remote distance one great nationality bound like the shield of Achilles by the blue rim of Ocean [...] I see within the round of that shield the peaks of the Western Mountains and the crests of the Eastern waves, the winding Assiniboine, the five-fold lakes, the St. Lawrence, the Ottawa, the Saguenay, the St. John, and the basin of Minas. By all these flowing waters in all the valleys they fertilize, in all the cities they visit in their courses, I see a generation of industrious, contented moral men [and women] free in name and in fact - men [and women] capable of maintaining in peace and in war, a constitution worthy of such a country!

• (1715)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member on her remarks.

We have heard a number of members of the government talk today about the importance of helping the vulnerable and the middle class, and I would very strongly agree with that. However, there is a disconnect between the words and the record.

The government significantly cut back on tax-free savings accounts in spite of the fact that more than half of those who max out their tax-free savings accounts are making less than \$60,000 a year. Those are the numbers available from the Finance Department.

The government's tax changes have brought absolutely no tax relief for those making less than \$45,000 a year.

There is a disconnect between the rhetoric on helping the middle class and the most vulnerable, and the record on this.

Would the member agree with me that helping those who make below \$60,000 and below \$45,000 a year is important and should be a priority?

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Mr. Speaker, this is a subject that is dear to my heart, the tax-free savings account. When I was working as a social work educator, I spoke to my students about this as a way to encourage asset-based savings to help people off of welfare and living on a month-to-month routine.

The Address

The tax-free savings account was originally, if we go back to the late Hon. Flaherty's thinking on this, intended as a savings vehicle for low-income earners and in that regard, the ceiling of \$5,500 per year is more than adequate to meet that requirement.

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my honourable colleague for her remarks.

As mentioned earlier, the NDP believes that it is important to combat inequality and poverty among children. This is a hot-button issue, one that comes up quite frequently in my riding of Drummond. Our young people must not be allowed to live in poverty. It is by helping them and by combatting poverty and hunger that our youth will have an opportunity to go to school and have a future.

We have a very interesting proposal to combat child poverty: to tax the compensation in the form of stock options received mainly by CEOs of major corporations, which constitutes absolutely shameful tax avoidance. This money could be invested directly into combatting child poverty.

What does my honourable colleague think of this approach of recouping the money currently being lost through completely egregious tax avoidance and investing it in the fight against child poverty?

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for his question.

As a matter of fact, we are investing in our youth by tying the Canada child benefit to basic income. This is not charity but rather a fair redistribution of our national resources. That is precisely why we set up this plan. It is non-taxable. It is money that families can keep. They can spend this money without having to worry that it will be taxed down the road. That is why we worked hard to put this program in place.

[*English*]

Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Fredericton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, thank you for the honour to rise again in this new year, in this new Parliament, this time in the true fashion of a maiden speech. It is truly an honour to represent the good people of Fredericton, New Maryland, Oromocto, the Grand Lake region and all the parts in between.

The opportunity to partake in such a privileged way to help govern and steer the course of our great country and provide voice for the region I represent is not only a true privilege but also stands as the realization of a lifelong dream for this young guy from Freddy Beach.

Over the past number of Saturdays at Fredericton's Boyce Farmers Market, I have been reminded just why I sought to find myself in this chamber in the first place. It has been encouraging to hear the many words from constituents eager to see the positive tone of inclusive leadership continue to pervade in the way we govern. These encounters, in addition to the 10 community round tables and town halls our office coordinated last week, have reminded me that we are here to build a Canada worthy of all those who we represent.

There are, for example, our young indigenous leaders, including those receiving guidance and education from staff at Chief Harold Sappier Memorial Elementary School on the St. Mary's First Nation; our entrepreneurial and socially minded graduates of the University of New Brunswick, of my alma mater, St. Thomas University and of the New Brunswick Community College; a Canada worthy of our aging population who in New Brunswick we look to as an asset for our collective prosperity; and a Canada worthy of all constituents who provide varying points of view and expertise on a wide range of issues with which this Parliament must wrestle.

• (1720)

[*Translation*]

I would also like to thank everyone who worked tirelessly during my election campaign. Their smarts and foresight were of great help in getting me elected. As all members here know, the determination and passion of a team are crucial to winning an election. I would like to thank them all.

[*English*]

During the campaign, what was most inspiring to me was the engagement in leadership of young people in the democratic process. Their enthusiasm and wisdom are important to the well-being of our democracy and their continued engagement will be an important component of the government's commitment to reform and ensure relevancy of our democratic institutions.

I, along with them, pledge our support and collaboration to the important work of the Minister of Democratic Institutions. We all share a goal of making our country stronger and I intend to work hard for the people of Fredericton.

This community boasts of the title of Atlantic Canada's "most entrepreneurial city" and is among Canada's top 10 best places to live. It has also been recognized as one of the most cost-competitive places to do business in the Americas.

As the 2009 cultural capital of Canada, Fredericton boasts of a burgeoning and diverse artistic and cultural scene, a scene sure to be enhanced through the government's reinvestment in social infrastructure and in the arts.

As a startup capital and Canada's first wireless city, Fredericton's richness includes its two world-class universities, community colleges, its hub of smart, high-tech entrepreneurs and businesses which are eager to see the government move ahead with an ambitious research and innovation agenda.

The riding I represent boasts of Canada's largest military training base, Base Gagetown, which infuses over \$500 million annually into New Brunswick's economy and employs over 4,500 permanent military personnel and 100 civilian staff who keep the lights on as military families come and go.

The Speech from the Throne was clear. Our government is focused. We have a plan that is forward-thinking as it is direct. The speech demonstrated, and this government so far has demonstrated, that we are ambitious when it comes to Canada's potential and, in fact, the potential of all Canadians.

The Address

At the same time, we have put forward a realistic plan that we know will deliver.

[*Translation*]

This plan is intended to ensure that all Canadians have a fair chance to succeed, and central to that success is a strong and growing middle class. The plan also indicates that the government will prove to Canadians and to the entire world that a clean environment and a strong economy go hand in hand. We cannot have one without the other.

To encourage economic growth, the government will make strategic investments in clean technologies, provide more support for companies seeking to export those technologies, and lead by example in their use. This can be done at our innovative research institutions in Fredericton.

Because it is both the right thing to do and a certain path to economic growth, the government will undertake to renew, nation-to-nation, the relationship between Canada and indigenous peoples, one based on recognition of rights, respect, co-operation, and partnership.

• (1725)

[*English*]

The government has committed to work with the provinces and communities to welcome and resettle 25,000 Syrian refugees by the end of February. Not only has this commitment demonstrated the true character of Canada within its citizens from coast to coast, it has helped reintroduce the compassionate and caring Canada for which we were once renowned to the rest of the world.

No other event has given me so much pride and made me feel so privileged as the opportunity to welcome the first arrival of Syrian refugees at the Fredericton airport in December. The smiles on the faces of the two young boys and the 12-year-old's pronouncement that he would grow up in our community to be a bone doctor, an orthopaedic surgeon, is a moment I will not soon forget.

The Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship has stated numerous times about how New Brunswickers have gone above and beyond to open their arms and hearts to refugees.

I wish to thank the greater Fredericton community, our multi-cultural association, and community groups, for their leadership in this process.

[*Translation*]

To support the health and well-being of all Canadians, the government will begin work with the provinces and territories to develop a new health accord. I want to point out that in Fredericton and in New Brunswick, we are counting on innovative health care. We want home care and mental health care to be more accessible, and we want mental health services to be of the highest quality for Canadians who need them, such as veterans and first responders.

[*English*]

When looking to innovate in health care, in its administration and its delivery, New Brunswick can lead. We are French, we are English, we are indigenous, we are newcomers, we are urban, we are

rural, and we are close and well connected. We are convinced that our region can lead in this approach.

Let me reiterate that the Fredericton riding is home to leading institutions and high-quality research and innovation. We are home to a highly qualified, educated, and professional public service. We want to grow a stronger economy, and we need to invest in helping our businesses and entrepreneurs become even more innovative, competitive, and successful in order to retain our young, skilled, and bilingual talent.

In Fredericton, as well, we will focus on real change for our veterans, and we will ensure that the government unconditionally cares for every soldier who has unconditionally sacrificed his or her physical and mental well-being to protect our country. It is important to give veterans more compensation, more choice, and more support in planning their future. Canada must be a world leader in caring for and supporting our veterans. With Canadian Forces Base Gagetown, the research capacity of our universities, and robust clinical supports close at hand, the Fredericton riding is ideally suited to lead in an approach that will care for the physical and mental health of soldiers, veterans, and their families from the moment they enlist, during their service, and after they leave the Forces and return to civilian life.

[*Translation*]

I know the greatness that Fredericton, New Brunswick, and our great country are capable of, and I know that our success is not only about doing well for ourselves, but also about leaving a better, more peaceful, more prosperous world for our children.

[*English*]

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague on his speech and his election. I was listening carefully to his saying that he is very proud of his party's plan for the economy. I think we all recognize that we are going through some challenging times.

The manufacturing sector is worth about 8% of our GDP. It is a huge part of our economy. I know it is very important that we address different sectors, but in the Speech from the Throne that we are debating today there was absolutely no mention of the manufacturing sector. We also note that there was no mention of the resource sector or the agriculture sector. However, in my community of Oshawa, manufacturing is huge and it is important. One good assembly job, for example, can have anywhere from five to 10 spinoff jobs.

The member said he is very proud of this economic plan. I wonder if he could comment on what the Liberal Party's plan is for manufacturing, particularly the auto manufacturing sector, because it is such a huge economic driver for all of our country.

• (1730)

Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Fredericton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is clear that after 10 years of having all of our eggs in one basket this government is prepared to diversify its approach to economic growth. That means looking at all different sectors of the economy to ensure that families, professionals, and people who go to work each day have an opportunity to share in the socio-economic wealth of our great country.

The Address

In the riding I have the honour of representing, we have a tremendous research and innovation capacity to build on new ideas and new technologies that help us advance in the information technology sector, the manufacturing sector, and the natural resource sector. We are close to markets all over the world. It is these types of approaches that make me proud to sit on this side of the floor and endorse a Speech from the Throne that, as I said, is as forward-thinking and forward-looking as it is realistic and ready to accomplish good things for all Canadians.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the hon. member for Fredericton on his election.

I do know quite a bit about the situation in Fredericton, New Brunswick. My colleague, the leader of the Green Party of New Brunswick, David Coon, has suggested that because New Brunswick has a significant population of seniors, we should support a renegotiation of the Canada health accord and look at federal-provincial funding for provinces under that health accord. Those provinces that have a large population of seniors and are looking at additional health costs should receive more in funding as a result.

I wonder if the hon. member for Fredericton would agree that this is an appropriate approach for the federal government to take in dealing with assisting provinces with their health care costs.

Mr. Matt DeCoursey: Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the leader of the Green Party that I have a great working relationship with the leader of the provincial Green Party, who holds a riding right in the middle of Fredericton. I look forward to working with him as well as the candidate for the Green Party in the election, Mary Lou Babineau, who ran a wonderful campaign. I share her collegiality in helping advance the situation of my community and province.

I could not agree more with the idea that this government is working with the provinces to address situations such as we have in New Brunswick, where we have an aging population, which, as I said in my speech, should be seen as an asset to our prosperity. We have tremendous people who are retiring with a wealth of experience, knowledge, and expertise to deliver back to our communities.

I am working with researchers, professionals, and members of all political parties to make sure that the community I have the honour of representing and our province are seen as a place to demonstrate innovations in health care administration and delivery that will serve as the basis for health care supports right across the country.

Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothesay, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the things that my colleague talked about was infrastructure spending and that after 10 years of Conservative rule, we are finally going to get infrastructure spending in our country.

I would ask my colleague what he feels infrastructure spending will do for his riding.

Mr. Matt DeCoursey: Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague from Saint John—Rothesay for his early success in developing a voice about the need to look to Saint John as a place where we can demonstrate a reduction in poverty, especially of young people. It is certainly an issue that is close to my heart professionally and in this activity now.

There is no doubt that as a government we need to support opportunities for community growth. In my community, we know that every dollar invested in infrastructure helps enhance the quality of life, well-being, and health of constituents.

I look forward to working with the member to identify opportunities for community development and growth through our infrastructure investments.

• (1735)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleagues for their warm welcome. I will share my speaking time with the member for Drummond.

I am very happy today to make my maiden speech in this Parliament, to be back in the House, and to represent once again the people of Beloeil—Chambly. I want to take the time to thank them for placing their trust in me once again.

Since this is my first speech, I would like to take a moment to say what a great honour it was to represent the people of Saint-Basile-le-Grand and Saint-Mathieu-de-Beloeil, the two municipalities that were removed from my constituency in the last redistribution process. Since Saint-Basile is where I live, I am heartsick when I walk around the town and talk with people. However, I always reassure them that I will ensure that the new member does his job well, because it seems he is my member too, now.

Even though those two municipalities are no longer in my riding, the issues are the same. I will come back to this, but first I would like to thank a few people, including my team. In federal politics, it is rare to keep the same team for four years. When MPs are re-elected, it is mainly because they represented their constituents well, but MPs cannot do the work alone. I would therefore like to thank Francine, Cédric, Suzanne and Sébastien, who have been with me from the beginning of this adventure and who have accomplished the herculean task of representing me in the community and ensuring that people received the services they were entitled to. The work they do is the reason that I am still here today and that some of them are still working for me.

I would also like to thank the team that supported me during the campaign. We knock on plenty of doors, but there are people, candidates and outgoing MPs, who spend a lot of time with us and who give us lots of great ideas. I would especially like to thank Jacques, Guillaume and Francine, who spent so much time with me on the streets of my riding.

I want to talk now about the throne speech, which is the subject of today's debate. Although we are pleased with the change in tone, I must say that the previous government set the bar rather low. Although we have noticed greater openness and a change in tone, that is not enough. We also need to see new measures, and that is unfortunately where I see certain shortcomings.

The Address

Consider for example the issue of climate change and the environment, an issue that was raised over and over during the election campaign. I would even say that that will be one of the most urgent issues in the coming years, not only for Quebec and Canada, but for the entire world. To tackle this issue, we need to set targets. However, despite the work done in Paris, those targets are a far cry from what we are hearing from this government. The Liberals have not set any specific targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. That is very disappointing, especially since the throne speech would have been the perfect opportunity to begin a real shift away from what the Conservatives did.

When we talk about the environment, we are not just talking about reducing greenhouse gas emissions. We are also talking about environmental assessments, which is another hot topic. We are being forced to accept the government's position on this, and that is to uphold the system that was dismantled by the Conservative government over the past few years, especially the past four years. This is unacceptable. That system does not work. It has to be reviewed and modernized. It did not even take into consideration the impact various resource extraction projects would have on climate change.

Change is needed if we really want our country to have a 21st-century system that satisfies Canadians and truly assesses the impact of projects on our environment in order to protect it. Despite the government's fine words, that change does not seem to be on the horizon. We will continue to push the government on this, because it is an urgent matter.

Speaking of urgent matters that were not mentioned in the throne speech, there was nothing about agriculture, despite the fact that supply management was a major campaign issue.

● (1740)

The government is prepared to sign an agreement that the Conservative government negotiated at the eleventh hour, in the middle of an election campaign. That agreement poses a serious threat to the supply management system, which guarantees the prosperity of our communities and our farmers, who provide us with healthy food and drive our local economy. That is very worrisome.

It is especially worrisome because farmers have lived with uncertainty for 10 years. They were constantly told by MPs that they should not worry and that the MPs would protect the supply management system. However, during the negotiations, it seemed that everything was on the table. The Liberal government must put a stop to such action, but that does not seem to be its intention.

Once again, this file was not mentioned in the throne speech. We must continue to push the government to ensure that it immediately changes direction. It is very urgent, and we must do so in the coming days, weeks and months, especially in light of the trans-Pacific Partnership agreement before us.

I want to talk about other things that were missing from the throne speech or other disappointments. Bill C-51 is another file on which the Liberals followed the Conservatives' lead in the previous Parliament. That was one of the greatest debates in the House in the 41st Parliament, and may have been the greatest one I ever participated in. The topic itself was very troubling.

As the Conservatives spread fear, our rights and freedoms were being rolled back, which we thought was unacceptable. Despite the Liberals' rhetoric and their claims that they were against Bill C-51, they voted in favour of the bill and committed to making changes that would address a lot of their concerns. However, despite those promises, once again, we did not hear a single word about this bill in the throne speech.

The process so far has not been very comforting. For example, the government has not been open to the idea of having opposition parties participate in the parliamentary committee that will ensure that the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, or CSIS, will be transparent enough to protect the rights and freedoms of Canadians.

In closing, I would like to say that the Liberals' supposed openness to the middle class about the income tax rate is yet another disappointment. People who earn less than \$45,000 will not see a penny of the Liberal Party's tax cuts. Those who will benefit the most are the ones who probably need it the least. That is very worrisome.

The NDP put forward a very simple proposal, but unfortunately, the government rejected our amendment, which would have broadened those measures to truly help the middle class.

When the government cuts taxes, it has to make sure that those who are not paying their fair share start doing so. I am thinking of big corporations whose taxes went down for years under one Liberal or Conservative government after another. The tax rate for big corporations is now among the lowest in the world.

We see no economic benefit from that. No jobs are being created. Some companies whose tax rates went down even left Canada, and people were left to pick up the pieces. That is very disappointing.

In closing, the throne speech is an opportunity for the government to state its priorities, and I would simply like to reiterate my short-term priorities.

I should mention that the Liberal candidate in my riding shared these same priorities during the election campaign. I therefore hope to have the government's support for these measures.

We want to resolve the conflict between the federal government and the City of Chambly regarding the payments in lieu of taxes once and for all. The federal government owes the City of Chambly \$500,000. We also want to resolve the issue of boating safety once and for all by protecting the shores of the Richelieu River and keeping boaters safe. We also want to talk about rail safety.

We asked a question during question period today, and we have yet to see the transparency we were promised.

● (1745)

There is a lot of work to do, and I am more than happy to continue doing it. I know that my colleagues and I will do everything we can to hold the government accountable and ensure that it acts in the best interests of all Canadians.

*The Address**[English]*

Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothesay, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my hon. colleague across the aisle for his great speech. My hon. colleague often mentioned how the NDP is a party that is for the middle class and for the Canadian family.

However, the Liberal Party implemented a tax cut for the middle class and is going to implement the Canada child benefit that is going to have more money for families, will benefit nine out of 10 Canadian families, and is going to pull over 300,000 children out of poverty.

The New Democratic Party stood with the Conservative Party and wanted to continue the universal child care benefit, which gave the same amount back to families whether they made \$300,000 or \$25,000 a year. Would my hon. colleague not agree that the Canada child benefit is a much better program for Canadian families?

[Translation]

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Mr. Speaker, we can give Canadians all the money we want, but if day care is too expensive, what good will the money do? That is why the NDP proposed affordable child care.

Now I want to talk about the middle class and how best to help them. The parliamentary budget officer is the one who said that the tax cuts will not help the people who truly need it. People need more than tax cuts. How many times have we heard about the need to the bolster the health transfers that were slashed by the Conservative government? That topic comes up often. People are very concerned about the viability of the public health care system. Unfortunately, that topic was also missing from the throne speech.

I heard some comments and heckling from a Conservative colleague, but as a member from Quebec, I can say that the NDP proposed a transfer for Quebec's child care system. With the rising costs in this province, a transfer would have been greatly appreciated by the middle class.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate many of the comments the member has made on the record.

I look at it as priorities. The member makes reference to priorities. I believe the Government of Canada has gotten it right. We talked a lot about it in terms of the election, and incorporated it into our platform: if Canada has a healthy middle class then we will have a healthier economy. If we give strength to our middle class, we will have a stronger economy. By investing in infrastructure, by investing in our middle class, as a community, no matter what part or region of the country we live in, there will in fact be more hope for all regions.

If we take a look at the broader picture, in terms of trying to deliver hope to Canadians, we should be talking about investing in our communities through things like infrastructure investment. We should be talking about building value to our middle class by giving tax breaks, giving child benefits.

Does the member not see, in the bigger picture, that the Prime Minister and the Government of Canada have gotten it right in the throne speech, that we are delivering a throne speech that will inspire

hope for our citizens, and that that is part of our job as parliamentarians here in Ottawa?

[Translation]

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Mr. Speaker, I certainly agree with my colleague when he says that strengthening the middle class is a good way to boost the economy. It is certainly true that a strong middle class will help the economy. The problem here is that he is talking about priorities and urgent matters.

I am thinking about how the government is dragging its feet when it comes to employment insurance. EI would help people who need it. At the risk of repeating myself, I am thinking about people who earn less than \$45,000 and will not get one cent of the Liberal government's tax cut. I am thinking about people who need to have their mail delivered at home and saw this government go back on its word. As far as infrastructure is concerned, I see a party that spent the entire election campaign promising to restore the tax credit for labour-sponsored funds in Quebec, when it said nothing about it for four years while the NDP was championing this issue in the House of Commons. Here too the government is dragging its feet, which ends up delaying projects and investments. I think the government still has a lot to learn about setting priorities and the urgency to act. We would be prepared to give it some advice.

● (1750)

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to deliver my first remarks in response to the Speech from the Throne, a very important speech. We are beginning a new year, 2016. I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone on my team who helped me during the election campaign. We worked very hard for nearly an entire year on the campaign. We worked on the ground. We met a lot of people, who told us which priorities they want this government to address. The Liberals form the government, and my constituents brought forward many priorities they wanted to see in the throne speech. For the people of the Drummond area, the city of Drummondville and all the rural regions in the Drummond area, I am very pleased to represent them and bring those priorities to the fore here today.

One of those priorities, which remains very important for the people of Drummond, is the whole issue of sustainable development. Over the past few years, we have been very successful. Considerable investments have been made in infrastructure in the Drummond area, including investments linked to sustainable development. We are building a new LEED library that will benefit from federal funding. We in Drummond should be very proud of our approach, which we need to maintain for the future.

The Address

Unfortunately, in both the throne speech and the Liberal Prime Minister's approach at COP21, the climate change conference that took place in Paris, targets to fight climate change remain very weak, just like when the Conservatives were in power. The people of Drummond are shocked by this. They are upset that the Liberals, who made big promises regarding climate change, have yet to propose any concrete actions or serious targets to fight climate change. We look forward to seeing specific actions from the Liberal government. We want to see many more concrete actions in the days ahead.

I would like to thank the leader of the NDP for appointing me as the official languages critic and for his excellent work on this file. There are some interesting signs with respect to this issue as well, but there is nothing concrete yet. We do not know if the freeze on official languages funding will be lifted. The budget has been frozen for almost 10 years. It should be indexed, and there needs to be more transparency with regard to how funds are allocated to official languages programs.

I introduced a bill on official languages concerning the bilingualism of Supreme Court judges. It requires judges who are appointed to the Supreme Court to have a good understanding of both official languages, precisely because it is the court of last resort for all Canadians. It is vital that all judges be able to understand both official languages, and this is extremely important for all official language groups in Canada. Consequently, I hope that the Liberals and the other members of the House will support this bill. We have been working on this issue for a number of years. My former colleague, Yvon Godin, the excellent member for Acadie—Bathurst, made this issue his personal battle and worked very hard for many years on it. He did a very good job, and I hope to complete what he started in the upcoming year.

We must not forget about fighting poverty. People in the greater Drummond area are extremely generous. Recently, there were all kinds of holiday charity drives in Drummond. People are generous and they give, but that hides the reality of poverty. There is still lots of poverty among young people, and that is totally unacceptable in a modern, wealthy society like Canada. It is unacceptable that there are still young people and children living in poverty who do not have the same tools and opportunities to create a future for themselves. We absolutely have to give them the opportunity to feed themselves, go to school, study, and eventually find a job and enrich our society.

• (1755)

That is why the Liberals must adopt our platform policy to end tax avoidance, which is a shameful and totally unacceptable practice in our society. Compensating the biggest CEOs of the biggest corporations with stock options is an appalling example of tax avoidance, and we have condemned the practice. We think that money should be taken and spent on fighting child poverty. We have been talking about that for a long time, and the time has come to act.

Speaking of inequality and the fight against poverty, the Liberals were very vocal about fighting poverty among seniors. That is a priority for the NDP too. We said that we would waste no time enhancing the guaranteed income supplement.

There is nothing about this in the throne speech. We said that we would drop the age of eligibility for old age security back to 65.

People in my riding and the greater Drummond area told me that the age of eligibility for old age security must absolutely be returned to 65, and that it makes no sense for a senior to receive only the minimum pension and the guaranteed income supplement. It is extremely difficult to live on just that; it is completely unacceptable. To combat inequality, it is crucial that the Liberals, who are now in power, take action immediately to drop the age of eligibility for old age security back to 65 and improve the guaranteed income supplement. They made promises and we want immediate action.

Speaking of the fight against poverty and inequality, affordable housing is another issue that is very important to me and to the NDP. It was also very important to Jack Layton, our former leader, who led the charge in the fight for affordable housing. He did an outstanding job.

In my riding, local groups have worked very hard to get community housing called *Envolée des mères*. It is housing for single mothers who want to go back to school or find a job. It is a place where mothers can be given lodging, guidance, help, and support, and where their children can also get help to get on their feet and become people who contribute to our society. I am truly pleased to have supported this project. In fact, I sponsored a housing project that I called the Jack Layton housing project in honour of our former leader.

We want to see something tangible done about affordable housing. In Drummond, all the municipalities, not just Drummondville, but also the small municipalities that have affordable housing, want sustained funding. It is extremely important. I hope to see something tangible soon because the Speech from the Throne is unfortunately quite lacking in this regard. We expect a lot from the government. It is not just about fighting poverty, but also about helping people to enrich our community.

In closing, the plan to strengthen the economy must also focus on SMEs. The NDP had a great plan. The greater Drummond area is a dream location for SMEs. Things are going well, but we must continue to support our small and medium-sized businesses. We had a very important plan to do just that. I hope that the Liberals will also implement concrete measures to support SMEs so that the greater Drummond area can reap the benefits. Naturally, we want to continue providing economic stimulus for our region, which we are very proud of.

The Address

I would add that there is one sector in which the Liberals have not done much and where they are having little impact at present, and that is disappointing. I am referring to the agriculture sector, which is important to my riding, as is supply management. We are waiting for concrete measures in support of farms that depend on supply management. I visited a dairy farm last Friday. We must support our farms that depend on supply management. The principle of supply management is vital to all the farms in the greater Drummond area.

● (1800)

I hope that the Liberal government will be able to move forward on this issue.

[*English*]

Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothesay, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague across the aisle for his great speech and to talk about, in particular, his comments on poverty. It is something that is near and dear to my heart, because my riding of Saint John—Rothesay, unfortunately, leads the country in child poverty. In ward 3, in fact, there are poverty rates of up to 50% for children, which is absolutely unacceptable for the city and the region.

My question for my colleague is this. The NDP was full of a lot of talk with respect to the middle class and families, but besides the \$15-an-hour minimum wage that it proposed, which was going to help fewer than 1% of Canadian workers, and despite the \$10-a-day day care plan that it proposed, which was going to take years to implement because many of the provinces were not on board, what other policies does the NDP have to help with children's poverty?

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Choquette: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his comments.

As he mentioned, we cannot continue to do nothing to combat child poverty. That is why the NDP suggested closing the tax loophole for stock options in the next budget.

Therefore, I would suggest that my colleague tell his colleagues and the Prime Minister to eliminate the loophole, which only benefits CEOs of major corporations, who are already millionaires. It is an unjust and unfair tax measure.

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bécancour—Nicolet—Saurel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the speech by my colleague from Drummondville. I want to congratulate him on his election and wish him a good term of office.

He did not mention the TransCanada pipeline in his speech, although this is very important to Quebec. His party does not seem to have a clear position. Eighty-two mayors and four million people have spoken out against the pipeline. Furthermore, the Quebec National Assembly unanimously set seven conditions. The member for Québec was also there at the assembly. None of these seven conditions has been met.

Is it not time for the NDP to take a clear position? Where does my colleague stand on the energy east pipeline?

Mr. François Choquette: Mr. Speaker, I also want to recognize my colleague and neighbour from Bécancour—Nicolet—Saurel. I

have a great deal of respect for him. Over the years, he has come to understand the inner workings of the House of Commons.

The NDP is totally opposed to the energy east project in its current state. It makes no sense. The existing project is flawed, has no social licence and has not been subject to the kinds of environmental assessments we should expect in a country like ours. Our safety standards should be world-class.

During question period, we repeatedly asked the Liberal government why it would not start the assessment process for the energy east pipeline over again. That is what the Liberals promised during the election campaign. When will they follow through?

● (1805)

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will share my time with the member for Manicouagan.

When voters give us a mandate to represent them and speak loudly and clearly on their behalf in the House of Commons, the seat of democracy, it is an honour and a great privilege. I was a member of the National Assembly. I have been teaching democracy for 30 years, and I believe it is important that all members have the opportunity to express themselves in this place, the very heart of our democracy, the legislative branch of government.

I would like to thank the people of Montcalm and assure them that they can count on me to speak on their behalf. I vow to represent them diligently and with determination. I will do everything I can to deserve their trust next time around as well.

I would also like to thank all the volunteers. We often forget that politics is not just one person's story. I would like to thank the entire team of people who believed in me 28 days before the election and who supported me so that we could have a strong presence and win a seat in the House. I would also like to thank my daughter, Lorilou, and my spouse, Josée, who has supported my political involvement for 25 years. At the end of the day, the only things a politician really has are his family and his integrity.

In Montcalm, there are 13 municipalities and three RCMs. It is a magnificent riding criss-crossed by several rivers and dotted with farms. Montcalm's main industry is agriculture. I will come back to that later.

The people of Montcalm sent a separatist MP to Ottawa. There is an old adage in democracy that says that if you pay taxes, you are entitled to be represented. Quebeckers pay taxes and they are entitled to be represented. I am a separatist MP, but I am a democrat. I would even say that since the Quiet Revolution, the separatist movement has demonstrated on a number of occasions that it is fundamentally democratic. I would say that the separatist movement is deeply rooted in democracy.

The Address

Look at the unilateral patriation of the Canadian Constitution in 1982. At the time, in response to an appeal by the Lévesque government, the Supreme Court declared that although this unilateral patriation was legal, it was illegitimate. We know full well that in a democracy, legitimacy is the foundation of legality. I would remind the House that still today, and since 1982, no premier of Quebec, whether federalist or sovereignist, has signed this Constitution. Nevertheless, Quebecers continue to respect the courts, pay their taxes, respect democracy, and even send their representatives to the House of Commons.

Look at the 1995 referendum, where Quebec legislation was flouted when the no side exceeded the spending limit. Quebec's referendum legislation was completely disregarded. Many say that referendum was stolen because at the time there was no requirement to identify oneself and present photo ID to vote and there was a lot of duplication on the voter list.

• (1810)

This system was in fact updated in 1998. In 1999, Quebec began requiring voters to identify themselves using a voter card to be able to vote. Since 1995, however, Quebecers have respected the results, despite the very narrow margin between the yes side and the no side, which was just 1% or 33,000 votes.

That was the case because the democratic ideal is at the very core of the concept of the sovereignty of the people. The democratic ideal is the very foundation of liberal philosophy, the very reason, in fact, that we, the members from all the parties, are here. Every nation state has the right to secure its own future and break free when another state is repressing it.

That is why the people of Montcalm elected a member who will represent them on issues such as gender equality, supply management and the TransCanada pipeline, which is not welcome in Quebec. They elected a separatist member who believes in democracy.

I am emphasizing democracy because in the throne speech, the Prime Minister of Canada said that he really wants to reform our parliamentary democracy. He said, “all members [of Parliament] will be honoured, respected and heard, wherever they sit.”

I would therefore humbly submit to all my colleagues that the 10 Bloc Québécois MPs, who were elected under the same banner and without a shadow of a doubt form a parliamentary group—that is a statement of fact and not a value judgment—do not have the same rights as all parliamentarians who sit in the House. We do not have the same means of ensuring that our voters are heard in the House.

The Prime Minister also said that he wanted to reform the electoral system. In a democratic society, the first thing to do so that the debate is not held by the experts or the politicians, but rather by the people, is to make a commitment to hold a referendum because it is the people who must ultimately have their say on changing these democratic rules. That was my experience when I was the official opposition critic on the reform of democratic institutions in Quebec and an attempt was made to change the voting system in Quebec.

It is my experience that a model that is put forward is often biased and quite often gives the advantage to the party that wants to

implement it. How can the Liberal majority believe that unilaterally imposing a model respects the tenets of democracy?

Democracy is based on principles such as gender equality and the separation of church and state. That is why we said during the election campaign that people must vote, take an oath and provide services with their faces uncovered. Those are important symbolic moments when we show our commitment to our democracy.

• (1815)

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my Bloc Québécois colleague on his speech. I think this is one of the first times I can rise in the House and say that I agree with something he said. I am talking about holding a referendum, because it is necessary for our democracy and it is really up to the people to decide whether individuals should show their face when voting.

That said, I would like to know whether, on the other side of the House, the government agrees that individuals should show their face when providing services, as my Bloc Québécois colleague is requesting.

Mr. Luc Thériault: Mr. Speaker, I cannot answer for the members opposite, but I think that my colleagues opposite will have to review the position, or lack thereof, that they took during the election campaign. Sometimes we do things to include newcomers, and sometimes newcomers do things to show that they want to belong. There are some very important occasions in our democracy. The right to vote seals the social contract. It is therefore not unreasonable, under section 1 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, to ask that anyone who wants to be part of my society show their face. It is not unreasonable, under section 1 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, to ask someone who wants to take an oath, to join the new country's culture and democratic society, to show their face. Section 1 of the charter guarantees rights “only to such reasonable limits prescribed by law as can be demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society”. That is the position of the Bloc Québécois.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question for the member of the Bloc is related to what I believe is one of the most significant policies Canada has as a nation. Many Canadians from all regions appreciate our health care system. One of the greatest treasures that we have here in Canada, and what many people identify with, is that we have a health care system that is there in times of need.

One of the biggest differences between this government and the government before us is that the current Prime Minister recognizes how important it is that we work with the provinces, our partners, in delivering on a number of services. One of the services that is important to me and my constituents and, I would argue, even to the member's constituents, is a strong national health care system.

The Address

My question for the member is related to health care. Does the member believe that the federal government should be working with all partners of our federation in trying to come up with a new health care accord, keeping in mind that the record amounts of money that we see today in health care are in good part because of a health care accord agreement that was achieved in 2004 and lasted for 10 years, guaranteeing a certain level of funding to ensure that we have good quality health care in all regions of our country?

• (1820)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Thériault: Mr. Speaker, health falls under Quebec's jurisdiction. During the 1990s, the federal government's commitment to health waned. Quebecers contribute around \$45 billion in taxes to the federal government, yet they are supposed to feel grateful for the \$12 billion they get back.

Various federal governments have cut back their health care contributions. There was a time when the government gave 50¢ per dollar. If the Conservative government had remained in power, we would be down to 18¢ per dollar now.

I would like the government to maintain health transfer increases at 6%, let the provinces decide what the needs are, and raise that amount to 25%.

That would be acceptable because Quebec is capable of managing its own health sector.

The Deputy Speaker: Before I give the floor to the hon. member for Manicouagan, I must inform her that she will have about seven minutes for her speech. She will have time to continue her speech when the House resumes debate on this subject.

The member has the floor.

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this is the second opportunity I have had to speak in the House, and I would like to begin by recognizing my constituents and thanking them for choosing me to represent the riding of Manicouagan. With 42% of the vote, I feel I have a strong mandate to represent them here in the House.

I would like to say a few words about something that seems to have been forgotten these past two days in the House, and that is the matter of respect. I see it on many faces and in certain speeches. The Speaker has also seen it today.

Of course, I could speak on behalf of the 42% who voted for me. At the same time, I am here to represent everyone in my riding. When I rise here, I do so in order to address the House, but as I promised, I also have the honour to do so on behalf of my constituents. It is a question of showing respect for all of my constituents, regardless of their political allegiances and despite the fact that I am a staunch and resolute separatist.

I want to reiterate to my constituents my commitment to build bridges, to be available and to be worthy of their trust by taking this noble action of rising in the House to speak. That is the first thing I wanted to say.

I am talking about Manicouagan in response to the Speech from the Throne because I did not hear much of anything in the House that was meaningful to me. Canada is certainly large; so is Quebec. The

riding of Manicouagan is in the easternmost part of Quebec, next to Labrador, and is 250,000 square kilometres in size. It is an immense riding. We refer to it as a region both in French and in English.

When I come to the House to represent my constituents, I bring their fears with me. I would have liked to see those fears dissipated in the Speech from the Throne, which makes no mention of the word "region". I could provide a number of examples.

This morning, the hon. member for Mount Royal talked about infrastructure, something that everyone is interested in. Infrastructure is a big part of the Liberal plan, and we are curious to see what will come of it. When I hear someone talk about a stretch of highway or a road that they would like to see built to stimulate the economy or add to the economy, I can certainly understand what they are talking about. However, with a riding like mine where there is 1,600 km of coastline and where 600 km is not covered by a road, I get inspired to rise in the House to represent the constituents.

I agree that improvements could be made everywhere. However, when we talk about economic stimulus or an economic plan, and this may be how the government feels as well, I would like to see one road from coast to coast. There could be one.

This is important to my constituents, who have to travel 600 kilometres to access health care or who are virtually stuck inside during the winter.

In my riding we have the White Trail. I do not know if people know what that is. It is a trail for snowmobiles. The only way to get around in my riding is to travel 600 kilometres by snowmobile. These people do not have access to some services or to democracy, in a way. It is unrealistic to have riding offices that cover my entire riding.

• (1825)

I wanted to talk about this notion of region, because we too often talk about what the economic benefits will be for Canada. However, when discussing development, we must also be daring. I do not know what is in the Liberal government's plan in that regard.

At this time in the House, I see from their faces that some people are being disrespectful, and that makes me sad. However, I will continue my speech about the 600-kilometre trail. I invite these members to travel on the White Trail.

I would also like to have talked about democratic reform, which was also touched on in the Conservative government's speech. My colleague from Montcalm mentioned it earlier. As a member of a political party, if I were to talk about just one principle, I would talk about the representation of ideas. We talked about debating ideas. The Speaker often talks about it; in this place we discuss ideas. One party can talk about democratic reform and representation if it wants to, because I believe that all ideas can be presented to the House and that we must have the same means.

As the representative of a riding or region, I believe that my constituents should have the same rights as all other Canadians. Just because one party, such as ours or that of the Leader of the Green Party, is not recognized, whether or not it is separatist, that does not mean that limits can be placed on its rights, its powers, and the means at its disposal to equitably represent the electorate.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Manicouagan will have three minutes to finish her speech when the House resumes debate on this motion.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

• (1830)

[*English*]

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Hon. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I now rise in the House on the opposition side to ask a question of the government. For the last 10 years it was the other way around. However, due to the results of the election, that has been turned around.

At this time, let me congratulate the member for Burlington on her election to the House of Commons and her appointment as the parliamentary secretary for international development, a position I held before we changed positions up here.

The question I had asked the minister had to do with the international response to the Syrian refugee crisis. We all know that the situation is dire. We have seen a massive amount of Syrians taking dangerous risks while travelling across Europe to try to get away from the ravages of war. That is a very small answer to a bigger problem in that region.

During my tenure as the parliamentary secretary for foreign affairs, I had the misfortune of visiting refugee camps in Turkey and Jordan, where we saw refugees who were running from the war, and they are in Lebanon too. Of course we are looking forward to the peace talks that will be taking place soon. We hope there will soon be a resolution to the Syrian conflict, and the Syrian people can go back home from the refugee camps.

The larger issue is that these people who are living in the camps need assistance from the world community. Canada has been one of the leading countries in providing this kind of assistance in the past. During the election campaign, our government announced that it would give over \$100 million to the refugee crisis, as well as matching funds. I have noticed that the Liberal government has carried on with that program, which is a good thing to do. However, in the larger scheme of things, with respect to a long-term solution, it has not addressed what it will do and how it will assist the refugees in the camps in Syria, which is my question.

The Liberals have made the announcements that they will match the donations of Canadians who wish to help. By opening up their doors to the refugees, Canadians have shown that they are concerned about it and are willing to provide assistance. My concern is that I do not see any efforts, publicity, or anything on the part of the government to address this issue. Perhaps the parliamentary secretary can tell us what our government is doing.

Ms. Karina Gould (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the

member across the way for his congratulations and extend my own congratulations on his re-election.

It is with enormous privilege and honour that I rise for the first time in the House. I would like to take the opportunity to thank the people of Burlington for bestowing on me the responsibility to be their voice.

I thank the member for his question and our shared concern for the people of the region. However, the question posed is based on a false premise. As he is well aware, Canada's contribution has been and will remain significant in the fight against ISIL. Our government is taking a multi-faceted and integrated approach to dealing with the crisis to ensure that Canada's response has the greatest possible impact for people in the region.

As he is also aware, our government is committed to reviewing our engagement to date in the region and looking at ways of addressing the serious needs there in a comprehensive and effective manner. We are undertaking that review at the present time.

Canada remains committed to the fight against ISIL and the protection of individuals in the camps. Canada's refocused engagement will strategically target areas where Canada's involvement can make a difference, leverage Canadian expertise, and complement the efforts of our partners, including through the training of local forces.

As I said at the outset, our work countering ISIL is only one part of our efforts to help address the serious crises in Syria, Iraq, and the region today. It is true that military and security efforts are vital to secure victory over those who are destabilizing the region and terrorizing the local populations, but they are not sufficient to secure a lasting peace for the people of Syria or Iraq.

We must not lose sight of the fact that the solutions to the crises in the region are first and foremost political, and that humanitarian and development needs are growing.

Our government has clearly indicated that it is ready to do more on the world stage. We are also committed to supporting countries and communities in the region that have so generously welcomed millions of refugees and displaced persons. To date, Canada has contributed over \$960 million in humanitarian, development, and security assistance in response to this crisis. Over \$650 million has been committed to provide life-saving humanitarian assistance on the ground. We are currently among the top 10 humanitarian donors in the region and are providing vital assistance such as food, water, shelter, health, and protection services to millions of conflict-affected people.

Furthermore, once areas have been stabilized and the most immediate humanitarian needs have been met, there is a need for long-term support to strengthen the population's capacity to rebuild their lives, infrastructure, and institutions. Without that long-term commitment, there is a far greater risk of yet more destabilization in the future and even the potential for states to fail completely, with all the human, political, and security costs that entails. Canada cannot stand by and let that happen.

Of course, we are very proud of the difference we are making in the lives of thousands of Syrians and Canadians by welcoming 25,000 refugees to this country. We all share in this pride.

Adjournment Proceedings

I would conclude by noting that all of these efforts together are part of Canada's comprehensive investment in a future for the Middle East region that is more secure, stable, and resilient.

• (1835)

Hon. Deepak Obhrai: Mr. Speaker, these are “feel good” statements from the Liberals. I will quote what the Minister of National Defence said today in question period. He said that our engagement over there approved by this Parliament was in a mess. What does he mean by “a mess”? It is an insult to our officers who are over there flying the CF-18 aircraft, as well as our trainers who are out there training the peshmerga.

Under my government, we had robust fighting head-on with ISIL. It is the current government that has now created doubt. Even our own allies are saying to leave the aircraft there to fight this thing, because they had been successful. To say that it is a mess, as the Minister of National Defence said, is a gross insult to the Canadians who are already over there. That is what they should be addressing.

Ms. Karina Gould: Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to perhaps correct the record. I believe it was actually the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship who said that

the immigration system is in a mess because of the record of the previous government on the other side of this House and not the Minister of National Defence.

However, as I noted earlier, I would like to emphasize that Canada is examining all of its efforts in the region at this time in order to ensure that our interventions are well placed to address the security, humanitarian, and development needs on the ground. We will ensure that our engagement is strategically targeted and well designed, not only to fight ISIL but also to address immediate threats to life, bolster regional stability, and strengthen local communities and governments. This coordinated effort will help provide the people of the region with a better chance to reconstruct their shattered communities and thrive in a more prosperous future.

[*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 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:38 p.m.)

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