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—

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, April 11, 2016

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayer

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

● (1100)

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: The House will soon consider private members' business for the first time since the opening of this Parliament. I would therefore like to make a brief statement regarding the management of private members' business. I want to remind all hon. members about the procedures governing private members' business and the responsibilities of the Chair in the management of this process.

As members know, certain constitutional procedural realities constrain the Speaker and members insofar as legislation is concerned. One such procedural principle concerns whether or not a private member's bill requires a royal recommendation. The Speaker has underscored this principle in a number of statements over the course of preceding Parliaments.

[*English*]

As noted on page 831 of the second edition of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*:

Under the Canadian system of government, the Crown alone initiates all public expenditure and Parliament may only authorize spending which has been recommended by the Governor General. This prerogative, referred to as the "financial initiative of the Crown", is the basis essential to the system of responsible government and is signified by way of the "royal recommendation".

The requirement for a royal recommendation is grounded in constitutional principles found in the Constitution Act, 1867. The language of section 54 of that act is echoed in Standing Order 79(1), which reads:

This House shall not adopt or pass any vote, resolution, address or bill for the appropriation of any part of the public revenue, or of any tax or impost, to any purpose that has not been first recommended to the House by a message from the Governor General in the session in which such vote, resolution, address or bill is proposed.

[*Translation*]

Any bill which authorizes the spending of public funds for a new and distinct purpose or effects an appropriation of public funds must be accompanied by a message from the Governor General recommending the expenditure to the House. This message, known

formally as the royal recommendation, can only be transmitted to the House by a minister of the crown.

A private member's bill that requires a royal recommendation may, however, be introduced and considered right up until and including third reading on the assumption that a royal recommendation may be provided by a minister. If none is produced by the conclusion of the third reading stage, the Speaker is required to decline to put the question on third reading.

● (1105)

[*English*]

Following the establishment, or subsequently the replenishment, during a Parliament of the order of precedence, the Chair has developed a practice of reviewing items so that the House can be alerted to bills which at first glance appear to infringe upon the financial prerogative of the crown. The aim of this practice is to allow members the opportunity to intervene in a timely manner to present their views about the need for those bills to be accompanied by a royal recommendation.

Accordingly, following the establishment of the order of precedence on February 26, 2016, I wish to draw the attention of the House to two bills which give the Chair some concern as to the spending provisions that they contemplate. These are Bill C-241, An Act to amend the Excise Tax Act (school authorities), standing in the name of the member for Saskatoon—Grasswood; and Bill C-243, An Act respecting the development of a national maternity assistance program strategy and amending the Employment Insurance Act (maternity benefits), standing in the name of the member for Kingston and the Islands.

[*Translation*]

I would encourage hon. members who would like to make arguments regarding the requirement of a royal recommendation for any of these bills, or with regard to any other bill now on the order of precedence, to do so at the earliest opportunity.

I thank honourable members for their attention.

[*English*]

It being 11:10 a.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

*Private Members' Business***FAIRNESS IN CHARITABLE GIFTS ACT**

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC) moved that Bill C-239, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (charitable gifts), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise in the House today to speak to Canadians about my private member's bill, a bill that I believe is fair, would benefit all Canadians, and that will foster a culture of generosity from coast to coast.

Parliamentarians get very few opportunities during their time as elected officials to present legislation. I consider myself privileged to have my name drawn as one of the first MPs to introduce a private member's bill in this, the 42nd Parliament. It took a great deal of consideration to arrive at Bill C-239, the fairness and charitable gifts act, and I consider it important to take a few moments to explain how I arrived at this idea.

When I learned that my name had been drawn first to present a bill, I quickly decided to gather information from my constituents. I asked for feedback and consulted with individuals and organizations in my riding. The input I received was overwhelmingly clear that people wanted a law that would protect the rights of the unborn, so I did a little research. Here in Canada, there are no laws in place that protect the rights of the unborn child. There are no guidelines governing when and why a termination of pregnancy can be procured.

In 1988, when the Supreme Court of Canada, in a divided decision, struck down Canada's existing law banning abortion, it also indicated that Parliament had the right to establish protection for the unborn child. In recent Supreme Court decisions overturning laws on prostitution and euthanasia, for example, the court directed Parliament to draft new legislation to protect the rights of individuals, while at the same time providing protection for vulnerable Canadians.

Our current and past governments have risen to that challenge, and have and are drafting legislation to meet these objectives. Unfortunately, past governments have not modernized human rights protections for individuals at early stages of life. We are among a handful of nations in the world that lack these protections. I believe this to be a serious failing on the part of previous governments. Many Canadians think there are at least some regulations governing this issue, but that is not the case.

Here in Canada, there tends to be a knee-jerk reaction to the word "abortion". I am sure that some members here, and some at home, felt some reaction or emotion as they heard me speak the word. It has been polarizing issue in this country, and the word has various associations for every individual.

This became apparent to me when I was originally crafting a private member's bill that would have at least aligned our laws with those of our allies and other developed countries. However, after a great deal of discussion and consultation, it became apparent that I would not be able to garner sufficient support from the hon. members in the House, despite the strong commitment that many of my colleagues show toward protecting the vulnerable. I recognize that a private member's bill updating these protections would not become law at this time.

If Canada is going to continue to be a nation that is blessed, I believe it must draft and pass legislation that protects the rights of women, which was unanimously upheld by the Supreme Court, but it must also provide for protection of the unborn child. We need to start a national conversation, and I believe that Canadians are capable of discussing this issue with open hearts and informed minds to ultimately come up with the right solution. To have no law is not a solution.

However, there are things that we can all agree on. Therefore, I changed direction and sought out an issue that would make a difference and could be supported by all parties in the House and all stripes of political affiliation. I decided to draft Bill C-239, the fairness and charitable gifts act. This is a bill that would correct the considerable gap between federal tax credits given for donations to political parties and individuals as opposed to federal tax credits given for donations to charities.

Feeding politicians should never be more important than feeding the hungry, healing the sick, educating the poor, or restoring the broken-hearted. This is not right. It is not fair. I do not believe that the current tax treatment of charitable donations reflects our Canadian values. The work that charities do is indispensable. There are many people who benefit from the services they provide. Charities change lives. Organizations that depend on charity of community to function have a unique feature, which is that they are directly accountable to their donors. People who donate their time and money to support a charity directly are more engaged with the effectiveness of that charity. This has generally resulted in both efficient and accountable charities.

• (1110)

I ask members of the House if any of them have been through the heartache of watching a family member or a close family friend slowly lose the battle to illness, a time when they relied on the charity and kindness of others to help them through that difficult and painful time. Are there any members who have witnessed the incredible blessing of seeing a friend or loved one beat a terrible illness due to advancements in medical research? Are there any members who have benefited, or have family members who have benefited, from a university scholarship?

Are there any members of this House with children who have attended a summer camp where they developed new skills and built lasting relationships? Are there any members whose children are involved in the arts community, through music, theatre, dance, and other pursuits? Are there any members who have experienced the joy of giving their time and money to help a charity that they deeply believe in and have seen the changes in people's lives and circumstances?

We can all agree that we have been touched in many ways by the great work that charities have provided to our communities. Make no mistake: Government provides much-needed help to Canadians who are struggling. However, let us be honest. Government cannot do it all; we in this House cannot do it all. There are many gaps in our system, and charities fill those gaps.

Private Members' Business

Every single day and night across Canada, charities provide food for the hungry, beds for the homeless, help to the hurting, support for the aging, and hope to the sick. Charities advance science and medical research. Charities promote education and care for our environment. Charities, especially faith-based charities, have been very instrumental in the resettlement of refugee families. Charities are invaluable.

However, despite the incredible impact that charities have had on our lives and our country, the fact remains that Canadian charities are faced with an aging and ever-declining donor base. In fact, the number of Canadians donating to charities has been on a long-term decline right across the country. The percentage of tax filers claiming charitable donations has fallen from a high of almost 30% to just over 20% over the past 20 years.

• (1115)

I fear that should this trend continue, Canadian charities that provide important services will be forced to close their doors. When Canadians were surveyed by Statistics Canada, it was discovered that the number one reason that people do not give more is that they simply could not afford to. This was the reason given by 71% of Canadians surveyed.

Given the trends in charitable giving, I believe the bill to be especially important now. With only a little over 20% of Canadians donating, this bill could re-inspire Canadians and continue to foster that culture of generosity, a characteristic that I believe is Canadian and central to our country and its people. The bill would make it more affordable for Canadians to donate to charitable causes.

How do we accomplish this? How do we encourage Canadians to get into the practice of making regular charitable donations?

As we are aware, an imbalance exists in how different types of donations are treated in Canada. Federal tax credits for political contributions—and make no mistake, colleagues, that is us here in this chamber—far exceed federal tax credits that are available to donations made to charities. I hope we all agree that this is just not right.

I am proposing to correct this inequity with my private member's bill, the fairness in charitable gifts act, Bill C-239. With this bill, donors to registered charities would receive the same generous federal tax credits that donors to political parties currently receive.

The bill would provide the largest incentive to the largest segments of the population, those who currently donate under \$400 per year and those who currently do not donate at all. If we accomplish this, our favourite charities, and indeed charities all across Canada, will benefit greatly, as more dollars will be freed up for donations. This would make it easier for small donors to become large donors and for people who do not currently donate to start.

Here is how it works. Under the fairness in charitable gifts act, Canadians donating to registered Canadian charities would receive the following: a 75% federal tax credit on the first \$400 of total annual donations; a 50% federal tax credit on the next \$350 of total annual donations; and the 33.3% tax credit on total annual donations over \$750. These federal tax credits would now be in line with the federal political tax donation credits, receiving the same percentage benefit at the same thresholds. Now, that is fairness.

Allow me to give one real-world example of how charities really do make a difference. Cliff and Jen Friesen live near the small town of New Bothwell, Manitoba, in my riding of Provencher. They are a close, hard-working family of five, but, sadly, they used to be six. They, like so many other Canadian families, have been touched by tragedy. Their young son Cash passed away three years ago from a brain tumour at the age of only two and a half. Of course the family was devastated, but they have resolved to ensure that Cash's death from cancer was not in vain.

The family has experienced tremendous support from various charitable organizations, both while they were going through Cash's illness and after he passed away.

The Canadian Cancer Society helped Cash receive chemotherapy at home in a safe and familiar environment. As well, it provided the family with all the information they needed for the difficult road that lay ahead of them.

The Children's Hospital Foundation of Manitoba provided state-of-the-art equipment and medical research. The foundation also provided toys for Cash and the other children to play with to help ease their fears while going through treatment.

The Candlelighters Childhood Cancer Support group made it possible for the family to go on special outings with Cash. They organized movie days, trips to the local amusement park, and a trip to family camp where Cash and his family could meet other families who were going through the same struggles. In fact, they are still providing support to this day.

Maranatha and the Word of Life Mission Church in Niverville made it possible for Cash's parents to spend the large amounts of time that were needed to tend to Cash in the hospital. The members of these churches stocked the family's refrigerator and freezers with food and supplies to help ease the burden. The church members made sure that Cash's siblings had lunches prepared for school, and of course they provided emotional and spiritual support.

The Make-A-Wish Foundation made it possible for the family to take Cash to Disney World just three weeks prior to his passing. The trip together as a family is a very special memory that they will cherish forever.

Finally, Southland Church in Steinbach provided Cash's family with a venue for the funeral at no cost and assisted with a great deal of help in the funeral planning. It also provided full pastoral care, including emotional and spiritual support and grief-share counselling.

• (1120)

By raising the federal donation tax credit simply to the level that we as politicians enjoy being able to offer to our donors, we can accomplish this: charities all across Canada would benefit greatly as more dollars would be freed up for donations.

Private Members' Business

I have highlighted only one aspect of charity in the previous story. Charity is much bigger than that. There are many types of charities, and charity touches every aspect of our Canadian life and culture. The changes that would take effect under the fairness and charitable gifts act would provide a very powerful incentive that would encourage more Canadians to give to the charities of their choice.

If trends in charitable giving continue and the doors of charities begin to close, more government programs will be needed to fill that gap. This means that people will pay more in taxes and have less control over how their money is spent. Not only that, people will suffer as they lose the indispensable support that charities provide to people who need it the most.

Charities exist to help, to educate, to advocate, and to provide valuable research and development. They are an integral part of Canada as we know it.

To summarize, the fairness and charitable gifts act would level the playing field between donations to political parties and donations to registered charitable organizations; it would encourage charitable giving by offering a more generous federal tax credit; it would increase the number of Canadians giving to charities; it would strengthen and empower charities; it would make it easier for small donors to become large donors and for people who do not currently donate to start; and it would reduce the burden on government social services, thus freeing up public resources for other important priorities.

We need to put an end to a system that is both unfair and unjust. Feeding politicians should never be more important than feeding the hungry. This is a bill for all Canadians and, I believe, a bill that could be supported by all parties in this House. I ask parliamentarians across the country and across party lines to support Bill C-239, the fairness and charitable gifts act.

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary for Sport and Persons with Disabilities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his speech.

[*Translation*]

I think that we all agree that community organizations play a vital role in our ridings. However, I have a few questions regarding the new proposal.

I undertook a process to determine how many community organizations there are in my riding. We created a database, carefully organized all the information, and looked at how these organizations work because there are a lot of needs. After reviewing the missions and values of these organizations, I quickly realized that there is a lot of duplication. There are three organizations in my riding with similar functions.

Does this bill take into consideration the fact that a number of organizations have the same mission and values? One way to save money or to give more money to an organization that can provide assistance in a riding would be to consolidate the organizations that have the same mission and values before creating even more organizations.

[*English*]

Mr. Ted Falk: Mr. Speaker, I believe the work that charities do right across Canada is very important. I think all Canadians do put their money into a single organization that they expect to do a certain amount of charitable work, and that is the Government of Canada. When we do that, certain agencies and programs are set up to deal with a lot of the issues I have talked about, such as medical issues, education, and social services support, but there are gaps in that system. As a result, charities have opportunities to become effective, to meet the needs of their communities, and to provide essential services in the gaps we have in our government services.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for the initiative that he has taken today. I would also like to congratulate him on being chosen to be the first to introduce a private member's bill.

I would like to ask a question about the bill. Could my colleague explain why he chose not to make a real comparison with political contributions? He made comparisons between political and charitable contributions several times in his speech. However, the major difference, which he failed to mention, is that there is a cap on political contributions. There is a maximum amount that people are allowed to give to a political party each year, so there is actually a cap on the tax credit for political contributions.

When it comes to charitable donations, people can claim up to 75% of their net income. The member failed to mention this several times. As a result, taxpayers with higher incomes could get a lot of money back if they receive a 33.3% tax credit on donations over \$750.

I was wondering why the member failed to mention in his speech and in his comments that the comparison the bill makes between these two things is not quite accurate. There is a cap on both political and charitable contributions, but the cap on charitable contributions is very high.

● (1125)

[*English*]

Mr. Ted Falk: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Sherbrooke for that question and the opportunity to further clarify what this bill would do and how it is somewhat different from political donations to a party or individual.

When a Canadian makes a political donation, there is a cap placed on that donation, and I think it is for good reason. We cap political donations so that special interests do not get promoted more than they should and so that individuals in Canada do not have more influence over a party or an individual than they should.

There is also a cap on charitable donations. That cap is 75% of net income, which is something that this bill does not adjust. It leaves that cap at that particular threshold.

There are some other differences between political donations and charitable donations. Probably the most significant difference is that a political donation will still be a refundable tax credit and a charitable donation is non-refundable. That means that when people make a political donation, they get that 75% tax credit whether or not they are paying taxes, but when they make a charitable donation, they would only receive that tax credit in the event that they were paying taxes.

[Translation]

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Gatineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague from Provencher on his initiative.

I rise today to speak to Bill C-239. Although I recognize its spirit and good intentions, I cannot support the bill given the serious economic impact it would have.

The fact is, the bill would increase the costs associated with tax credits for charitable donations by about \$1 billion a year, which would diminish the government's ability to pay for important public programs that Canadians rely on.

As the Minister of Finance indicated when he tabled budget 2016, the government believes that Canada is at its best when all citizens have the opportunity to reach their full potential. Canada enjoys an abundance of wonders and resources. Its greatest wealth, however, resides in the generosity of Canadians, who are well known for their compassion, tolerance, and kindness. Our nation's social fabric is strengthened by the many citizens who donate their time and hard-earned money to a variety of very worthy causes.

In fact, as part of National Volunteer Week, tonight I will have the privilege of honouring a number of volunteers in my riding, Gatineau.

[English]

Canadians value and embrace inclusion, honesty, and hard work, and they express themselves through their generosity of spirit. For example, Canadians have opened their hearts and communities to welcome Syrian refugees. Every day Canadians spend countless hours feeding the hungry, visiting the sick, and committing a million other acts of kindness that build communities. To the best of their ability, Canadians share the blessings they have been given. The impressive size of the charitable sector in Canada is the result of Canadians' compassion.

• (1130)

[Translation]

Canada's charitable sector accounts for an incredible 8.1% of our GDP, making it larger than our retail, automotive, and manufacturing sectors. We have more than 86,000 registered charities, 81,000 not-for-profit corporations, and more than 750,000 community agencies. These institutions play a vital role in every neighbourhood all across Canada.

The government believes we must support this important sector. That is why we support tax incentives for charitable donations. Canadian tax incentives for charitable donations are among the most generous in the world. The federal government already provides \$3 billion in tax assistance annually to the charitable sector.

Private Members' Business

When we add provincial tax relief to the equation, Canadians can expect to get 46¢, on average, for every dollar donated above \$200. A tax credit is also available for up to 75% of an individual's or couple's net income and can be carried forward for five years.

Of course tax credits are important, but they are not the only or the main reason a person chooses to make a donation. In fact, many individuals would probably donate even without any tax credits.

According to Statistics Canada's 2015 general social survey, only 26% of donors said they made a donation mainly to get an income tax credit. More than 91% of donors reported that their donations were motivated by compassion towards people in need, and 86% said they were motivated by a personal belief in a cause.

As a government, we want Canadians to have the means to take action. Effective economic policies and a prosperous economy require strong social policies that create opportunities and build communities where diversity and equality can grow. Charity begins at home.

[English]

The impressive size of the charitable sector in Canada is the result of Canadians' compassion. To believe otherwise is doing a disservice to millions of hours spent in the service of others.

Federal tax assistance for charitable donations is approximately \$3 billion per year. This places Canada's system of tax support among the most generous in the world. As others have already mentioned, Statistics Canada's information shows that what drives charitable giving is personal belief.

Our government's efforts, as contained in budget 2016 and in budgets to come, do not seek to change that balance. Rather, what the government proposes is to strengthen the middle class by giving more help to those who need it and less to those who do not.

The mandate letter to the Minister of National Revenue contains, as a top priority, addressing some of the critical areas facing charities in Canada today. The Minister of National Revenue is expected to "Allow charities to do their work on behalf of Canadians free from political harassment, and modernize the rules governing the charitable and not-for-profit sectors, working with the Minister of Finance".

In fact, the Minister of National Revenue has recently announced that the Canada Revenue Agency will be winding down its audits of the political activities of charities and will instead consult with charities to clarify the rules. This is in recognition of the critical role that charities play in society and their contribution to public policy and public debate on behalf of all Canadians. These consultations will help charities continue their important work in a regulatory environment that respects and encourages their contribution.

Private Members' Business

[Translation]

However, we believe that society as a whole, through its Parliament, must also take action. That is exactly why budget 2016 provides immediate assistance to the people who need it most and lays the foundation for sustainable economic growth. Even more importantly, this budget focuses entirely on the people and the issues most important to them, such as strengthening the middle class, creating jobs, and growing the economy.

Even before the budget was tabled, almost nine million Canadians were already benefiting from the middle-class tax cut that went into effect on January 1. The government introduced the Canada child benefit in the budget. Compared to the current system of federal child benefits, the Canada child benefit will ensure that nine out of 10 families will receive more money than they receive under the current system beginning in July 2016. This measure will help lift hundreds of thousands of Canadian children out of poverty.

The Canada child benefit represents the most important innovation in social policy in a generation. Together with the middle-class tax cut, the Canada child benefit will ensure that middle-class families have more disposable income that they can use to support their families, their work, their communities, and many other worthy causes where the not-for-profit sector is so effective.

Charity begins at home, but we can do more. Investing in measures that will improve the living conditions of Canadians will ensure that our country once again becomes a world leader. Canada will make a valuable and tangible contribution to its own prosperity and will embody the best Canadian values: generosity, compassion, and openness.

Budget 2016 contains measures that fulfill the promises made to Canadians and lay the groundwork for a better Canada today and for future generations.

● (1135)

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise in the House today, not only because I want to congratulate my colleague from Provencher on his bill, but also because he spoke about the benefits and positives of his bill, as well as the more negative aspects of the bill. This is worthy of being discussed in the House. It is good that we have already had a conversation about this bill and that we can debate it, because everyone here agrees that charities do important and extraordinary work across Canada. Every day, in each one of our ridings, we can see the good work that these charities accomplish for their communities.

I thank my colleague for his initiative, since Bill C-239 is an important measure. It is important to examine this bill carefully before voting, since it can affect many things, including costs, for example. This bill could result in some costs to the public treasury, a topic that has come up today. We are talking about a major change to charitable donations and the associated tax credits.

My colleague compared these donations to donations to political parties. I have a hard time using that comparison, since there is a maximum annual amount one can donate to a political party and claim a tax credit. We need to take a close look at this cost. The tax credit for donations to political parties is 75% for the first \$400, 50%

for donations between \$400 and \$750, and 33.33% for donations above \$750. This comparison can be made, but it is important to note that charitable donations are capped at 75% of net income.

Donations of \$750 or more will represent a tax credit of 33.33%, up from the current 29%. It is therefore important to take into account that higher-value donations made in Canada, that is, those worth more than \$750, will result in a tax credit worth 4.3% more. This tax credit will go into the pockets of the wealthiest people. I think we can all agree that those who donate more than \$750 a year tend to be wealthy, since they have the means to do so. As parliamentarians, it is important for us to examine this situation, specifically the fact that part of these tax credits will go into the pockets of the wealthiest Canadians. It is fair to say that donations of \$400 or less represent the vast majority of donations made in this country, and they generate a tax credit of 75%. I think it is also fair to say that most donations made by Canadians are under \$400.

It is therefore important to look at the cost of this measure. That shows the importance of the decision we have to make when voting on this bill. Whenever bills are introduced, it is important to always consider the costs involved. A Library of Parliament study estimated that this kind of change to the tax credits would cost between \$1.3 billion and \$3 billion.

In this debate, it is also important to try to determine whether there really is a link between enhanced tax credits and an increase in donations. To date, no direct causal link has been established or quantified in terms of the value of tax credits and the quantity or value of donations that might be made if tax credits are enhanced. It remains to be seen whether this measure will have the desired effect. The outcome my colleague from Provencher is hoping for is clearly an increase in charitable donations. Of course, we encourage our fellow Canadians to give more and to support the charities in our ridings.

● (1140)

However, it is not yet clear to me that enhancing the tax credit would produce the desired effect. That is probably for the parliamentary committee to figure out with the help of subject matter experts. They will be able to examine situations in other jurisdictions where changes to tax credits may have had a significant impact.

In this study and in our debate, we must also look at other ways to help charities in Canada. Sure, tax credits count for something, but there are many other ways to help Canadian charities.

Part of the bill's preamble gives us pause, unfortunately. It reflects the sponsor's attitude, in a way. I would like to read from the preamble:

Whereas Canadian charities, both secular and faith-based, deliver critical social support for our communities and are well-equipped to remove some of the burden [I would emphasize "remove some of the burden"] placed on government social services;

Private Members' Business

I found that part of the preamble interesting. It reveals the sponsor's mindset, which I believe is wrong. It is not okay to say that the government should off-load government services and expect charities to pick up the slack. The government's main mandate is to provide high-quality, accessible, affordable services to all Canadians. In today's debate, we need to focus our attention on this notion of transferring the burden of government services to charities. We do not necessarily want a government that off-loads its responsibilities, strives to provide fewer and fewer services, and tries to wash its hands of certain things in our society.

Again, I wanted to talk about the fact that there is currently a limit to charitable donations of 75% of net income and that limit represents non-refundable tax credits. However, people who have the means could use this as a form of tax avoidance. We have seen that happen. In this debate, it is important to point out that people can use tax credits for charitable donations. There is no denying that the money goes to a charitable organization, but nor can we deny that some Canadian taxpayers might be tempted to use this enhanced tax credit for donations greater than \$750 to their advantage. The tax credit for donations greater than \$750 increases by 4.3%, and some people might try to use this credit to avoid paying their fair share of taxes.

I must say that the NDP has always defended tax fairness in Canada, where everyone pays his or her fair share and we can have a tax environment with a semblance of fairness. That is important. Given the revelations that we are seeing a growing number of taxpayers try to dodge their tax obligations, it is important for us to also have a debate on tax fairness in Canada. In fact, the government announced that it wanted to review tax expenditures. It is also important to have this debate on all tax credits available in Canada, which are a burden on the treasury. It is important to have a thorough review of our fiscal framework to ensure that it is fair and that people with the most means pay their share so that important government services can be delivered to the entire population.

• (1145)

This does not have to stop charitable organizations from doing good in their community. Let us not confuse the two.

I want to commend my colleague on his initiative. I look forward to discussing it at length.

[*English*]

Mr. David Sweet (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague, the hon. member for Provencher, for bringing forward this bill to encourage Canadians to contribute more to our charities by ensuring fairness in how these contributions are treated as tax credits. More than fairness, this initiative would make a strong statement on how these contributions are respected and valued. There is so much good done by charities in every community across Canada that we as a civil society should be doing more, not less, to promote this.

The people of my constituency of Flamborough—Glanbrook and in fact all of the greater Hamilton area are well known for their generosity. They are above-average contributors to a wide range of local, national, and international charities and causes that make life better for their fellow human beings. I would refer to a comment published in a local newspaper editorial in December 2009 from the

director of community relations at Mission Services in downtown Hamilton. He said, "Hamilton is the most generous community I've ever lived in. People have really responded despite the difficult economic climate".

I see this first hand at hundreds of local charity breakfasts, walks, fundraising dinners and auctions that I attend on a regular basis in the greater Hamilton area. If people want to see how community-based organizations stretch a dollar to make a real difference in people's lives, they just need to tag along to one of these events or join me in serving dinners at the downtown Hamilton mission at Christmas and Thanksgiving. I know many hon. members from all sides and parties in the House can attest to similar experiences in their own communities on a regular basis.

This is why the model proposed by the hon. member for Provencher in Bill C-239 makes so much sense. It would lift up the contributions to charities doing outstanding work on a local, national, and international basis to an equal footing with donations to federal political parties. It is a simple notion that the hon. member has articulated well already: Why should feeding politicians be more important than feeding the hungry, or helping youth who are struggling with addiction, or providing the desperately needed funds for research that would find a cure for cancer? Cancer is something that pretty well every member of this House, somewhere among their families and friends, has been touched by. The answer is quite simply, it should not.

Built on the principle that donations to registered charities in Canada should get equal treatment to political contributions, what Bill C-239, the fairness in charitable gifts act, would do effectively would be to incentivize donations under \$750 per year. Frankly, that is the majority of Canadians and it has the potential to have the greatest impact. To reiterate in a nutshell, and I know these numbers are familiar to members of the House, donations under \$400 would receive a 75% tax credit compared to the current 15% on the first \$200 donated, expanding to 29% on the next \$200. Contributions between \$400 and \$750 would see a 50% tax credit versus the present-day 29%. Meanwhile, the portion of total contributions over \$750 would see a modest incentive of 33.3% compared to 29%.

Members of this House and all Canadians can readily see why this would encourage greater participation of Canadians donating to registered charities at higher dollar amounts than they currently do. When we consider that the median level of donations to registered charities claimed on tax returns is currently \$280, there is lots of room to grow, and lots of new donors to bring into the family of charities as well.

Private Members' Business

Why is this so important? One of the reasons is demographics. At a time when there is increasing pressure to provide social services of all kinds in our communities, there is a decreasing participation by Canadians as donors to charities. Fewer tax filers are making contributions. The average age of a donor is also rising. Just as our population ages and the need for many services increases, charities are struggling to meet annual fundraising targets. As my colleague has pointed out, we have seen a staggering drop since 1990 in the number of Canadians who contribute. Add it all up and the long-term trend is less than positive. With greater need, fewer resources, and an aging population, we need to stem this tide, and Bill C-239 is a practical solution to do just that.

This is particularly true when we consider the range of services, support, and medical research that the charitable sector does, and that this reduces the burden on government today and tomorrow. If we can reverse the charitable donations trend, we can help pre-empt a funding crisis in the future.

• (1150)

Is this good public policy? We can bet it is. Is it good economics? Absolutely, and here is why. It helps offset social spending by governments at all levels, freeing up resources for other priorities. It is also very effective because often the local organizations are the closest to the problem, understand the circumstances they are in, and therefore are best suited to help. They know best how to marshal the support of all local volunteers and show compassion in our communities.

We should also consider and review in the debate on Bill C-239 that the reinvestment in the economy of the tax refunds of Canadians has a considerable impact. We know this and it is well documented, especially when local charities stretch those dollars for maximum impact in delivering programs and real-world solutions as mentioned earlier. That is why instead of asking whether we can afford to do this, we should really be asking ourselves whether we can afford not to do this.

In closing, I would like to come full circle and mention a few examples from my hometown.

I would like to talk about Liberty for Youth and Living Rock that are there day in and day out to take those youth who many people would write off saying they are not any use to society, to rebuild their lives and help them to be contributing citizens.

Threshold School of Building is another one that helps to educate youth who have not made better choices in their life so they can start at ground level on construction jobs and begin to build a career for themselves.

There is The Bridge and St. Leonard's Society that do a great job taking those who have been convicted of crimes and re-assimilating them, teaching them life skills, helping them to rehabilitate, get out and be contributing citizens in our society.

There is the Bob Kemp Hospice and Good Shepherd Emmanuel House where my own younger brother passed away this past summer during the election.

These places are funded by charitable donations, and they are there at a time of life when people are desperate for love and

compassion. They are there to help every day of the week. They rely on those people who are generous to give.

The Salvation Army helps people with addictions. I was just in there the other day in downtown Hamilton. They have a trustee program for people who are recovering from addictions and do not know how to handle their finances. They can pay their rent, and make sure they have money at the end of the month, even though they are on social services. It is extraordinary, but the funding has just been cut. It needs more charitable donations in order to cover that. The hostel program helps those who have been struggling with addiction to get back on their feet. There are 12 separate rooms in the Salvation Army that are helping individuals get back out and reconnect with their families, and be contributing citizens in our society.

Flamborough Women's Resource Centre, Drummond House, and Interval House are helping women who have come across a family tragedy and are dealing with violence.

This past December, my wife Almut and I had the pleasure of serving breakfast on behalf of the Farmers' Dell Co-operative Preschool fundraiser. This registered charity serves families in Binbrook and Upper Stoney Creek.

Binbrook Scouting Group is also very active, holding massive annual spring cleanup days every year. The group picks up mountains of garbage. It benefits from charitable donations as well.

There is one more that I think deserves special mention. Every year for the past 13 years I volunteered for the annual Ancaster Community Food Drive. Some years my wife and I have helped run routes and have collected food donations from doorsteps. Other times we have stayed inside and have worked six or seven hours just sorting food. I am always joined by Hamilton firefighters and members of the Hamilton Police Service.

The food drive is run with precision by an outstanding group of volunteers, not the least of whom is the energetic retired Ancaster High School guidance counsellor and teacher, Jan Lukas, who welcomes everyone with her bright smile.

The Ancaster food drive is a huge local success story. In its 23 years of operations, it is now approaching 1.5 million pounds of food donated and processed. This food goes to a number of organizations throughout the greater city of Hamilton and helps thousands of families.

I was heartened to learn that the food drive has grown so much over the years that they have now committed to a larger facility to be able to sort all the food that is collected during the food drive. It is simply amazing. While much of the food is donated without getting a tax receipt, financial contributions to the organization that underpin the food drive is what makes it possible.

Private Members' Business

I could go on and on, but I have limited time for debate. These are great examples of what happens when we allow people to have more opportunities to give, and we give them more incentive to do that. Bill C-239 does exactly that. I encourage all my colleagues to support this bill, to make sure we are giving help to charities, to make sure that we reach all those people who are less fortunate, and build our communities to be stronger ones.

• (1155)

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to discuss Bill C-239, which proposes to amend the Income Tax Act to increase the tax deduction for individuals with regard to charitable gifts to registered charities.

First, the government recognizes that charities are vital to the well-being of our society. They touch the lives of all Canadians, inspire us through the arts, enlighten us through education, heal us through institutions and medical research, support us through hard times, and make our nation the caring and inclusive society that has earned Canada a worldwide reputation for compassion and a social conscience.

I am proud to say that Canada has one of the largest charitable and non-profit sectors in the world. Estimates suggest that Canada has more than 170,000 charities and non-profit organizations, making it the second largest in the world.

Approximately two million people are employed by these organizations, representing 11% of the economically active population. The sector represents \$106 billion, or 8.1%, of Canada's GDP, making it larger than our automotive, retail, or manufacturing industries.

Remarkably, more than half of the charities in Canada are run entirely by volunteers. Through their work, these individual volunteers are living proof that the dedication of one's time to improve the quality of life of people who need a helping hand is a cornerstone of a healthy civic life and a vital exercise in leadership. Volunteers are remarkable people who make a real difference in people's lives without seeking monetary reward.

At the same time, the government recognizes and supports the vital role that thousands and thousands of Canadians play in providing their generous financial support to the sector in recognition of its important work. To support Canadians in this charitable giving, the government provides tax incentives for charitable donations, which have been described as being among the most generous in the world.

For example, registered charities are exempt from tax on their income and may issue official receipts for donations received. Donors may use those receipts to reduce their taxes by claiming the charitable donations tax credit for individuals or the charitable donations tax deduction for corporations. Also, for most taxpayers who give more than \$200, the charitable donations tax cut eliminates any tax payable on most donations and reduces other taxes payable.

Taken together, federal tax assistance for charitable donations exceeded \$3 billion in the last fiscal year. Certainly, these incentives have an important role to play in supporting a strong and effective charitable sector in Canada.

Charities are also highly diverse in their revenue sources. Some depend primarily on donations from the public, some raise considerable income from fees, while others operate relatively from the support of businesses. Still others depend highly on funds from the federal and provincial governments. However, as we have seen, the most remarkable support for charities in Canada is from Canadians themselves.

According to a 2015 Statistics Canada General Social Survey, 82% of Canadians made donations to a charity or non-profit organization. Furthermore, only 26% of donors chose the income tax credit as a primary reason for making a charitable donation, while 91% chose compassion toward people in need, and 88% chose personal belief in a cause.

Canadians know that charities play a vital role in our communities and provide valuable services to Canadians. However, like Canadians—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (1200)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. We are still in private members' business. The hon. member for Laurentides—Labelle still has the floor. We are finishing up private members' business and then we will go to the next rubric on the orders of the day. I ask members to keep their conversations low until we finish up with this and then we will carry on.

The hon. member for Laurentides—Labelle.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Mr. Speaker, like Canadians, this government also understands that governments must play a vital role in our communities and provide valuable services to Canadians. We share the same values and are united by the principles of fairness and inclusiveness which have made Canada a model for the world. Budget 2016 is a clear statement of our ability to transform these values into a better world.

Budget 2016 delivers on the government's agenda to empower all Canadians to build better lives for themselves and to enable them to contribute to and share in the prosperity of our country. It sets the foundation for an inclusive and fair Canada.

Budget 2016 will give Canadian families more money to help with the high cost of raising their children by replacing the current complicated child benefit system with a new Canada child benefit. The introduction of the Canada child benefit represents the most significant social policy innovation in a generation.

Budget 2016 also makes investments in education, infrastructure, training, and other programs that will help to secure a better quality of life for Canada's indigenous peoples and build a stronger, more unified, and more prosperous Canada.

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It invests in modernizing and updating public transit, improving water and waste water systems, expanding affordable housing, and protecting infrastructure systems from the effects of climate change. It makes significant new investments to support seniors in their retirement years with increased benefits to ensure that Canadian seniors have a dignified, comfortable and secure retirement.

It will increase funding for innovation, collaboration in partnerships to protect the integrity of our health care system. It makes essential new investments in legal aid and reinstates funding for the court challenges program in order to improve access to the justice system. It puts people first and delivers the help that Canadians need now, not a decade from now.

At the same time, it invests for the years and decades to come for our children and grandchildren, so they may inherit a more prosperous and hopeful Canada.

As we move forward with these part investments, we will be guided by a sense of fairness to ensure that Canada's best days lie ahead. We will do our part to help ensure that Canada's charitable sector remains a strong force in securing this brighter future.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: Before giving the floor to the hon. member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, I should mention that there are about three minutes remaining in the time provided for private members' business.

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House to talk about this bill, even though I do not have much time. First, I would like to thank the member for Provencher for his candour, since he admitted in his speech that the primary purpose of the bill was to provide fiscal resources to anti-choice groups.

The proposed measure would affect all charitable organizations that could benefit from such a tax credit, depending on their needs. As a result, although the member was being honest, it seems a little inappropriate to me to put a spin on this tax credit so that it benefits certain groups in particular. That being said, the bill targets all charitable organizations. We always analyze the issue because there may be serious repercussions.

Next, I would like to set the record straight regarding some false information in the preamble of this bill. The bill compares tax credits for charitable donations to those for political contributions, when there is no comparison to be made between the amounts of these contributions.

Right now in Canada, tax expenditures related to charitable donations exceed \$2.3 billion, while tax expenditures associated with political contributions are approximately \$30 million. Transferring that \$30 million to charitable organizations will be nothing more than a drop in the bucket, if that is the intention here.

I know that I will likely have the opportunity to talk about this issue again in the second hour of debate, but I would like to point out that increasing tax incentives to try to increase charitable donations has a limited effect. Of course some people make charitable donations in order to receive a tax credit, but that is only one of many reasons why people give to charity. There are other factors to consider.

For example, in my riding, Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, donations to Centraide Bas-Saint-Laurent have declined significantly over the past five years. This is not a case of people being less generous, but the result of massive cuts to the public service and also to such organizations as the Maurice Lamontagne Institute, which had employees who were major donors, but now has fewer of them. This economic situation was created mainly by the previous government, and this caused the decrease in donations.

I hope I will have time to debate this further during the second hour.

• (1205)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques will have seven minutes when the House resumes debate on the motion.

[*English*]

The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the order paper.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed from March 22 consideration of the motion that this House approve in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise today to respond to the government's first budget. I would like to begin by sharing a quotation that a colleague recently sent to me. It goes like this: “[T]he debt and the deficit burden pose much more than an economic challenge. This is a moral issue too. What right do we have to steal opportunity away from our children”?

These words are as true today as they were 22 years ago. It might surprise my colleagues across the aisle to know who spoke those words. Speaking in this House, the former member for LaSalle—Émard struck upon a fundamental truth: borrowed money is not free; it is a debt that will have to be repaid by future generations. These words were spoken by the Right Hon. Paul Martin, a former Liberal prime minister and former finance minister.

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While the party that he once led may now question the wisdom of his words, Her Majesty's loyal opposition does not. He knew the importance of having a fiscal anchor, a fiscal discipline, and a clear plan. Only with those do we have the ability to safeguard all of the programs that we need to care for the most vulnerable in our society. How can we have a compassionate government without a strong economy?

As Conservatives, we think that if we are to borrow on the backs of our children and grandchildren, we better have a very good reason to do so. Canadians deserve a plan and they deserve a clear path to prosperity. They deserve to know why the government needs so much more of their hard-earned dollars. Frankly, they expect the government to know what it is doing. Unfortunately, the government's budget fails on all of these counts.

[Translation]

I will be very clear on these three points.

First, the government is borrowing and spending a lot more money than it promised. Second, it is already raising taxes to pay back what it is borrowing and spending, and it will have no choice but to raise them again. Third, even after spending and taxing, the government has no strategy to create jobs or grow our economy.

•(1210)

[English]

Let me elaborate on those points.

First, the government is borrowing and spending a lot more money than it promised for no clear economic justification other than a political one.

Second, it is already raising taxes to pay it back, and it will have no choice but to raise them again in the future. Canadians are already overtaxed.

Third, even after spending and taxing, the government has no strategy to create jobs or grow our economy. Expert after expert have said that there is no evidence that any of the spending will create jobs.

On this side of the House, we are all worried about the uncontrollable borrowing. By refusing to live within its means today, the government is endangering growth and prosperity tomorrow and endangering the important programs on which Canadians rely. This is not just a hypothesis. If we remember the last time the Liberals were in power, we saw a 30% reduction to health care transfers. In fact, it is an irrefutable evidence-based fact, one that Canadians of a certain age know all too well.

If we remember the 1970s, the promise of the day was for a modest deficit, which back then was about \$12 billion in today's dollars. That ballooned to more than a \$70 billion deficit in just a decade. Interest rates then skyrocketed, investment vanished, and jobs disappeared.

By 1984, 20% of the federal budget was being eaten up just by interest payments. That is nearly three times as much as the government spent on defence, and five times more than it spent on health care.

If we fast forward to today, we are now seeing this happen in Ontario, where reckless borrowing has led to massive debt and deficits, and interest payments are now consuming money that should be spent on health and education.

[Translation]

A generation of opportunity was lost, and it was a long, painful journey back. With this budget, I fear the Liberals are taking Canada down the same perilous path.

[English]

We have seen it before, but it is back. It is that old, tired 1970s fiscal policy, ideas that do not stimulate any growth or create any jobs.

We were joking the other day that we all love retro, because it is back. We love the retro fashions of the 1970s, even some of the furniture. In fact, I even bought myself a new vinyl record player on eBay. However, one thing I do not like is 1970s fiscal policy.

Canadians are now asking why they should trust the government with more of their hard-earned money. How can they trust the government when the story is constantly changing? After promising modest deficits of no more than \$10 billion, it has handed Canadians a bill for three times that amount. It promised to balance the books within four years, and it broke that promise too. Then it said our debt as a share of our economy would fall. That is broken promise number three. In fact, right now, it is not even telling Canadians how much it is spending, when it is spending it, and what exactly it is spending it on. It is almost as if we have to remind the government that the money actually does not belong to it.

I hope Canadians had a chance to hear about the parliamentary budget officer's report last week, which confirms all of these points. In fact, one of the staff in the parliamentary budget office, which is an independent office of Parliament, said in the 15 years he has been reviewing budgets, he cannot remember one that has been so deficient in the information that was provided to the public. In other words, the government is not being transparent with Canadians' tax dollars. Therefore, how can Canadians trust it? How can Canadians, who work so hard for their money, trust the government with their paycheques if it will not, at the most basic level, be transparent?

Canadians are also worried that there is just spending, but no actual plan. The problem is that, when a government borrows and spends without a plan, that little bit that it talked about turns into a lot very quickly. It already has. Therefore, Canadians are now asking when it will stop and how much will be enough.

The eminent Canadian economist, Jack Mintz, wrote on budget day that "Canada's debt bomb has just gotten a lot bigger". Why is that? It is because Canadians know borrowed money is not free. We have to pay for the privilege. Also, the more we borrow the more it costs and the less we have when a real crisis comes around the corner, and of course the less we have to pay for the things Canadians need, like health care, retirement income, and pensions.

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All this borrowing leads us on this side of the House to another point. How are they going to pay it back? The Conservative opposition knows very well, and so do taxpayers, that today's deficits inevitably become tomorrow's taxes. Canadians know that the Liberals are taking more of their money now just to take more of their money later.

In fact, the government could not even wait until tomorrow. Taxes are already going up. Personal income taxes are up by \$1.3 billion this year and will go up nearly twice that much next year to \$2.4 billion. The Liberals are so proud of their tax on the so-called one per cent. Why would they be proud of raising anyone's taxes in Canada?

The bottom line is that the budget was not designed to help the middle class, as the Prime Minister had promised during the election campaign. It is instead a betrayal of the middle class. For example, the Liberal government is rolling back tax-free savings accounts, the single most important personal financial vehicle since RRSPs. Millions of Canadians use them. Almost 70% of Canadians who use them are low- and middle-income Canadians, but the Liberals are scaling them back. Why would the government want to do anything to discourage Canadians from investing in their retirement, doing the responsible thing?

On the other side, it is shuffling around child benefits, which have a proven record of success, and leaving thousands of families out in the cold. The universal child care benefit, which the Liberals are eliminating, was universal and it lifted hundreds of thousands of kids out of poverty. However, they cancelled it. Tax credits for arts classes and for fitness classes are gone. Families relied on them. These credits gave them a break.

•(1215)

Having said that, probably the biggest betrayal in this budget was to small business owners. Small business owners were promised time and time again during the election campaign by the Prime Minister that small business tax rates would be going down, but the Liberals have abandoned that promise to lower taxes on small businesses and, at the same time, cancelled the small business hiring tax break. In addition to that, payroll taxes are on their way up.

[*Translation*]

The Liberal government is even increasing taxes for students, children's sports activities, and charitable organizations. That is just the beginning, a preview of what is to come. It is a simple and irrefutable fact that if the Liberals are not willing to control their spending, they will eventually have to raise taxes.

[*English*]

Let us talk about the impact of this budget on young people who are, right now, facing employment challenges. Why would the government add to their debt burden by raising the taxes on textbooks and education? Young people get it. They do not need a 1970s fiscal policy of interventionist big government. Conservatives want everyone to encourage a new economy that flourishes with less government intervention, not more government intervention, and young Canadians understand that. They know that good ideas, solutions, new technologies, and new platforms come from entrepreneurs, from people who are willing to take risks with their

new ideas. The government has suppressed that. This is just the beginning. This is just a preview of more to come. It is a simple, irrefutable fact that, if the Liberals are not willing to control their spending, they will eventually have to raise taxes more.

What can Canadians expect for all of this borrowed money and tax hikes? The short answer is that Canadians are not getting what they thought they had paid for. For all of its spending, this budget does little to address the real economic challenges Canada does face, including unemployment in manufacturing and in the natural resource sector. Our economy may be growing, but it is growing unevenly. The oil and gas industry alone has lost 100,000 jobs. Families in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Newfoundland and Labrador are struggling. In fact, they are desperate. What Canada needs now is a job plan, but this budget is not it. The Liberals still, after all of these years, have not figured it out.

It is not governments that create jobs; it is the private sector that creates jobs. This idea that growing the size of government is the answer is just wrong. We need the government to grow the size of the private sector, and this budget does nothing to encourage the private sector to invest in the economy and create well-paying, high-quality jobs. The job of the government is to create the environment for the private sector to flourish, and then, frankly, it should step aside and let people succeed.

Yet, the government makes barely any mention of helping the natural resource sector, the industry where our economic problems lie and where solutions are needed today. It is offering no support for the manufacturing sector, which according to the latest job numbers, is where we are seeing very low growth, even with the low dollar. Instead, higher taxes, higher energy and input costs, with the threat of a carbon tax, and uncertainty in the approval process for energy infrastructure are driving investments away from Canada and out of these sectors.

If Canadian farmers are looking for a sign that the government respects the agricultural and agrifood business, they will not find it. There is not one word in the budget. The only new support for agriculture is not going to farmers; it is going to Ottawa bureaucrats. As for the Liberals' promised infrastructure plan—and I do not know if members know this—there is actually no new money for highways, roads, or ports. These are the kinds of trade-enhancing investments that Canada needs today to move our goods to market, and these are the ones that Conservatives funded when we were in government. It was a good idea then, and it is a good idea now.

Most troubling of all is the fact that the Liberals are cutting programs that are important to our national security. They are slashing funding to Canada's military, in a return to the Liberal decade of darkness, and delaying much-needed equipment for the men and women of Canada's military in favour of spending on special-interest projects. As new stories of terror attacks come in from around the world, the Liberal government announced that less than 1% of its \$30 billion spending spree would go to public safety.

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[Translation]

Make no mistake, the Liberal government is on the brink of causing real, long-term damage to our economy. Our Conservative members are not the only ones saying so. The Liberal government's budget landed with a thud on March 22.

[English]

The reaction ranged from disappointment to outright confusion, as Canadians struggled to understand what \$30 billion of their tax money had just bought them, from the *Ottawa Citizen*, which said “Canada under [the new Prime Minister] is going to look a lot like Ontario under Dalton McGuinty and Kathleen Wynne”, to *The Canadian Press*, which said that the losers in this budget include small businesses, national defence, and Canadians who want a lower tax burden.

Dan Kelly, the head of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, who represents hundreds of thousands of small business owners, said that budget 2016 is “brutal for small businesses”; and John Ivison, one of our favourite columnists at the *National Post* said—and I am quoting this because it was so good—“this budget is a broken pipeline of federal tax dollars, gushing money to numerous pet Liberal causes”. I could not have said it better myself.

However, I did. Let me quote myself. I might as well take the liberty of quoting myself. The Leader of the Opposition said, “This Budget is a nightmare...for taxpayers”.

Therefore, what should a responsible government be doing? The fact is that we live in a highly competitive economy. If Canada is not an attractive place to work and invest, opportunities will go elsewhere. In fact, they already are.

What should we be doing? We should be aggressively pursuing free trade. We should be streamlining regulations. We should be cutting taxes, not raising them. We should be approving job-creating projects in a responsible way. That is how we create jobs. This budget does none of that.

[Translation]

By borrowing \$10 billion without a credible repayment plan, raising taxes on families, and throwing out barriers to job creation, this government has failed on its most important job: keeping Canada's economy strong. Canadians want true leadership to support the Canadian economy. This budget offers nothing but platitudes and promises.

• (1225)

[English]

Worse still, the Prime Minister and his team continue to throw up roadblocks to job-creating pipeline projects and the thousands of new jobs that come with them. In British Columbia, they are sending mixed messages on LNG. During his recent trip to Washington, the Prime Minister did not even bother to bring his natural resources minister along, despite the enormous stake that our energy and forestry industries have in a bilateral relationship.

We on this side of the House know that Canada should be making the private sector a partner, not a target. This will not cost the federal treasury a dollar but would create thousands of jobs. We should be

supporting proper infrastructure spending that has a lasting impact, with transparent selection criteria. We should be pursuing free trade deals like the historic trans-Pacific partnership that will lead to \$5 billion to \$10 billion in long-term GDP growth. We should have an actual commitment to balancing the budget within the next four years. It can be done, because it has been done.

[Translation]

We on this side of the House know that it is possible to be fiscally responsible and create a strong business climate, and it is possible to do that while at the same time being compassionate, since the government has a responsibility to help the most vulnerable in society.

[English]

How do we know that? We know that because that is what our Conservative government did for the last decade. We steered Canada through the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. We did it while lowering taxes to their lowest level in 50 years; creating 1.2 million net new jobs, 90% of which were in the private sector; balancing the budget as promised and leaving a surplus; successfully negotiating free trade agreements with 51 countries, including the European Union and the trans-Pacific partnership; and approving pipelines to the United States and the northern gateway pipeline to get oil to tidal water. We did it while pulling hundreds of thousands of children out of poverty with the universal child care benefit and, thanks to the late and greatly missed Jim Flaherty, doing more for the disabled than any other government in Canadian history.

We also did all of that while at the same time raising health care spending by 70%, raising direct benefits to Canadians to their highest levels in history, and raising transfers to the provinces and territories to their highest levels in history. We also concluded a historic multi-million dollar settlement for thalidomide survivors, and we concluded more first nation specific land claims than any other government in history.

We did it because we had a plan, a clear plan, and provided real economic leadership. Without real economic leadership, there is no means to pay for all of these important social programs that so many Canadians rely on when they need our compassion.

Therefore, as Her Majesty's loyal opposition, we will push the government. We will be loud, and we will encourage the government to do the same as we did, which is to have a plan, to be fiscally responsible, to live within its means, to unleash the private sector. If not, we will not have a strong economy, and without a strong economy, we cannot have a compassionate government.

On that note, I would like to conclude, and I also move:

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

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

A. includes a deficit of at least \$29.4 billion;

B. contains wasteful spending;

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- C. has no plan to balance the books;
- D. will fail to boost economic growth or create jobs; and
- E. betrays the middle class by raising taxes on families, individuals and small businesses.”

• (1230)

The Deputy Speaker: The amendment is admissible.

Questions and comments, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first if I may, I wish everyone a very happy Vaisakhi, a very special celebration across Canada today as we celebrate Khalsa here on Parliament Hill.

It is an interesting speech that we just heard from the leader of the official opposition. If the Conservatives were as visionary as they like to think, they would recognize that the budget that the Prime Minister and this government have put forward is an amazing budget. It deals with investing in Canada's infrastructure. It invests in our children. It invests in our middle class. This is a budget that the Conservatives should be voting for.

It is a bit tough listening to a Conservative who is trying to provide advice on deficits. I need to remind the former government and the Conservative Party that no lesson can be taught from that party on dealing with Canada's deficits. They inherited a multi-billion dollar budget 10 years ago, and they converted it into a multi-billion dollar deficit. They have never had a balanced budget.

Why does the leader of the official opposition believe they can give advice on budgetary measures when the Conservative government was a total failure at delivering a balanced budget for Canadians?

Hon. Rona Ambrose: Mr. Speaker, I feel quite confident in saying it because the numbers and the facts are clear. We left the current government with a balanced budget and with a surplus. That is what we promised Canadians, and we delivered on it. The current government promised Canadians the same thing, and within 30 days it backtracked on its promise.

The big difference is that in 2008, when we took on a deficit, we were in a global recession. We are not in a global recession right now. In fact, the latest job growth numbers in some sectors are not bad. However, in parts of our economy we are struggling. Ironically, in the parts of our economy where we are struggling, like manufacturing and the oil and gas sector, it is in fact regressive Liberal fiscal policy from the seventies that is harming those sectors.

I appreciate the member's comments, but I would say to check the facts. We left the government with a surplus and a balanced budget as we promised Canadians. As always, we did what we said we would do.

• (1235)

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for her speech. Much of it I do not agree with, especially the assertion that government does not create jobs, that only the private sector does. I think we can all agree that the private sector plays a central role in job creation. This information would come as a surprise to all

the teachers of the country, our civil service, of course, social workers, and all of the social help that this country is receiving. They would be surprised to know that they are not actually employed and receiving help from government.

Speaking of job creation, there is something on which we can agree, and it is the central role of small and medium-sized businesses in creating jobs. The NDP recognized that back in 2008 and proposed a reduction of the tax rate on small and medium-sized businesses from 11% to 9%. The Conservatives, to their credit, implemented that in the last budget. Now we have the Liberals who promised the same thing in the last campaign, and they decided to break their promise and keep that rate at 10.5%.

I would like to ask the Leader of the Opposition what the impact of this broken promise by the Liberals will be on small and medium-sized businesses.

Hon. Rona Ambrose: Mr. Speaker, first I want to say that I am heartened to hear that the member does not agree with much that I say, because after the New Democrats' convention in Edmonton and their adoption of the Leap Manifesto, I want to distance our party from them as far as we can.

I will agree with the member on one point, and that is our disagreement with and concern that the Liberals broke their promise to small business owners. I quoted in my speech the head of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, Dan Kelly. It was interesting that he said that in the 40 years of this organization, this was the first year it had not been able to meet with the government to talk about the budget. It represents hundreds of thousands of small businesses.

Not only did the Liberals break their promise on the small business tax rate, but they cancelled the hiring tax credit for small businesses, and payroll taxes are going up. As many experts said on budget day, the biggest losers in this budget, sadly, were small business owners.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are bragging about how the former Liberal government supposedly left behind a surplus. At the time, they had taken nearly \$60 billion from the employment insurance fund and put it into government operations.

Furthermore, they had made massive cuts to provincial health and education transfers to balance their budget.

Would the leader of the official opposition talk about whether these kinds of practices were used when she was in government? Did we cut provincial transfers to balance our budget, or did we take other measures?

[*English*]

Hon. Rona Ambrose: Mr. Speaker, the member is correct. The truth is that we took on a deficit at a time of global recession, and we said we would do it to stimulate the economy. However, the interesting thing was the measures we took to stimulate the economy.

The Budget

While experts are saying they cannot see evidence in this budget of programs that will create jobs or stimulate the economy, we, at a cost of several billion dollars, introduced the home renovation tax credit. That stimulated the economy, as people spent money in their communities and invested in their own homes. It was an expensive initiative, but it was time limited. It did its job, and it put a lot of money into the economy.

We coupled that with tax breaks for small businesses and for Canadians, things like introducing the hiring tax credit for small businesses. All of these things generated economic stimulus, and, of course, that resulted in more revenue for the government. It allowed us then to see growth. We had the highest growth record in the G7. That then allowed us to increase our transfers to the provinces for health care by 70%, increasing our transfers to Ontario by 89%.

We lowered taxes, and we were still able to be compassionate in our programming. We raised the funding for the kinds of things that Canadians need most. It is possible, and we will urge the government to take the same path.

• (1240)

Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette (Winnipeg Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, aboriginal children are a wonderful reason to invest. The \$8.4 billion will not be wasted. It is an investment in the personal futures of our fellow citizens.

The premise of the hon. member for Sturgeon River—Parkland is that this idea is a wasted investment, that indigenous children are a wasted investment, that lifting 300,000 children out of poverty is a waste.

I have spoken at many churches in Winnipeg, and they have the ideals of compassion. They have the ideals that collectively we have the responsibility to our fellow citizens and that indigenous people are not just pet causes. They are an integral part of Canada. They are Canadians who deserve not to be ignored but to be engaged.

Should we waste another generation of indigenous Canadians, or should we engage in the future of all Canadians together?

Hon. Rona Ambrose: Mr. Speaker, the member has our full support for programs that will result in benefits to young aboriginals. The concern is that there has been billions of dollars invested over many decades and that we continue to see problems like we saw today, with 11 kids trying to kill themselves.

Suicide rates with the young are on the rise. We have major health care problems on first nations. There are some very bright spots, do not get me wrong, but we need to hold those who are receiving the money to account.

The funding matters, and the funding is there. The concern is, why are we not seeing results? Why do kids continue to kill themselves on first nations? What are the results in terms of kids' education?

This is a concern for every single Canadian. My message back to the government is on accountability. Why did the Liberals remove transparency and accountability for the chiefs of first nations? Frankly, I am not interested in making first nations' chiefs happy. I am interested in seeing families on first nations—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Hon. Rona Ambrose: Those leaders in our first nations need to be just as accountable as every leader in this House. That means that when they use taxpayer money, it should be transparent. Only then will families, women and children, get the support they need.

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise on behalf of the NDP to begin the debate on the budget recently tabled by the new Liberal government.

The budget always turns out to be a huge document. We can support some of the measures it contains, because many of the commitments the Liberals made during the election campaign were poached from the NDP's platforms in 2015, 2011, and 2008. Obviously, we can only support those measures.

It also includes other measures, or half-measures, that do not live up to the commitments made during the election campaign or do not meet the needs expressed during and after the election campaign. In that respect, the government should have listened more closely, but it did the opposite. Contrary to what the government members may believe, many aspects of this budget are far from positive.

Let us begin with the good, the positive elements that, for the most part, were taken from our platform. Let us start by talking about income splitting. When the previous Conservative government announced the measure, we immediately pointed out that it was extremely inequitable and would primarily benefit the wealthiest Canadians. In addition, it would decrease women's participation in the workforce. It would effectively be a tax incentive encouraging them to stay at home rather than contribute to society and participate in the workforce. We promised to immediately abolish this measure, and so did the Liberals. This is included here, so we applaud this initiative.

However, some of these measures cause consternation. We support the measures, but the government did not follow through with them to the extent it promised. I am talking about the tax credit for labour-sponsored funds. This has been an ongoing battle ever since the Conservatives announced the phasing out of this tax credit, which is extremely important for labour-sponsored funds, one of the country's biggest sources of venture capital.

This issue is especially important in Quebec, where the FTQ's Fonds de solidarité and the CSN's Fondation work closely with private venture capital organizations to help businesses that would otherwise be left behind, ignored, or neglected by traditional funding bodies, such as banks. Their work has been recognized. Because of it, Quebec, which is mainly where this happens, ranks third behind Israel and the United States among OECD countries with the highest level of participation in venture capital.

The Budget

When this tax credit was eliminated in Ontario, there was a significant drop in venture capital investments in Ontario, such that Quebec, which has a smaller population, now has roughly the same level of investment as Ontario when it comes to venture capital.

We promised to keep this tax credit and I personally fought to make it happen. The Liberals then made the same promise, but immediately after being elected, they promised to get rid of the tax credit. As a result, the tax credit is now down to 5%, when it was originally 15%. According to the definition of the word “immediately”, a 15% tax credit should have been in effect during the 2015 fiscal year. However, that 15% credit does not come into effect until 2017. We see that as a step backward. At a time when people were deciding where to put their savings, this created a lot of uncertainty.

Another thing that seems positive to me has to do with recreational and cultural infrastructure. This was an NDP proposal because we could not understand why the infrastructure budgets in the building Canada program did not include projects that not only stir communities into action, but also help stimulate the economies of those very communities.

• (1245)

After completing required upgrades to its waste and water systems and roads, a municipality that made it a priority to improve its citizens' quality of life and strengthen the community through its sports, recreation, and cultural infrastructure could not secure federal government funds because its requests were specifically excluded from the building Canada program.

Municipalities know best what they need and what their priorities are. In our opinion, it makes no sense for the federal government to establish their priorities, as was the case with the former Conservative government.

We support the initiative that will allow municipalities to secure federal funding for sports and cultural infrastructure.

However, there are several other elements to consider. Yes, there are investments for youth, but the amount is half of what was promised during the election campaign.

Yes, there are investments in public transport, and we agree with that. That was also part of our election platform. However, it falls short of what the new Liberal government promised during the election campaign and, again, it could make it difficult for municipalities to meet public transit needs, because a good part of this money is back-ended.

Now, let us get to the bad. I asked the opposition leader about one of the worst broken promises in this Liberal budget: reducing the tax rate on small and medium-sized businesses from 11% to 9%.

Back in 2008, the NDP recognized that SMEs are job creators and an important driver. We realized this and proposed reducing the tax rate from 11% to 9%. Other NDP governments, such as the Alberta government, have gone even further and completely eliminated taxes on SMEs, bringing the rate to 0%.

The Conservatives ignored this policy for a long time, but finally adopted it in their last budget in 2015. We welcomed this measure,

although it was one of the rare times we could agree. We welcomed this initiative and were pleased that they had taken the NDP's idea.

This decrease from 11% to 9% was meant to be gradual, and the rate was set at 10.5% for 2015-16. Once the Liberals finally realized that the NDP and the Conservatives were right, they committed to lowering the SME tax rate from 11% to 9%.

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: It was about time.

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, absolutely. It was about time they did that.

What did we see in the budget? The Liberals broke that promise. They reneged on the formal commitment that was made and put SMEs in an extremely difficult situation because they had planned around that decision, given that the three parties had reached a consensus. By freezing taxes at 10.5%, the government put many SMEs in a tight spot and is taking away their power to invest and hire, which is what they were previously proposing to do.

Another promise that the Liberals broke in this budget was their promise to eliminate the tax loophole for stock options as a method of compensation. This loophole mainly benefits the wealthiest members of our society, particularly CEOs and board members of major corporations.

Ninety per cent of this tax credit is used to finance stock options that are given to these people as compensation or income. However, that compensation is not subject to the Income Tax Act. Instead, it is subject to capital gains taxes when the shares are sold.

The negative impact of this measure is twofold. First, it costs the Canadian treasury nearly three-quarters of a billion dollars a year and, of course, it mainly benefits the wealthy. Second, this measure creates a perverse incentive for companies to take short-term measures to increase the value of their shares and thus allow CEOs, decision-makers, and managers to sell their shares at a higher price.

• (1250)

This negative and unintended consequence is widely recognized by economists and business analysts. The Liberal government followed the NDP's lead and promised to eliminate it, but there is no sign of that in the budget.

Other elements are conspicuously absent, such as credit card transaction fees, a major obstacle to growth and investment in business, particularly small business. A measure to address that would have cost the federal government nothing. Canada has some of the highest fees in the OECD, and businesses have to absorb that cost. The Liberal government has done nothing to address that.

The Budget

[English]

Other countries in the world have actually addressed this question. We have seen movement by different means in Australia and in the European Union on this issue: in Australia the rate is regulated by the central bank, while in the European Union, it is set by regulation. They have recognized that credit card fees are a hindrance for the expansion of businesses, particularly for small and medium-sized businesses. There is nothing on this in the budget.

Try as we might, we will not find anything about forestry in this budget. We have major problems right now in forestry. We do not know where our relationship with the United States will go in terms of softwood lumber. We are at the end of the agreement, and there is lots of uncertainty right now.

We have a problem that is akin to the pine beetle in Quebec and in New Brunswick, a parasite that is creating or threatening to create lots of major losses for the industry. There is nothing in this budget for that.

The government is deaf to the demands and needs of this sector, as it has been for the aerospace industry.

• (1255)

[Translation]

During the election campaign, we put forward a concrete strategy to help not just one struggling company but an entire sector that is critical to Canada's economy. The Liberal Party had nothing to say about it during the campaign. Now it is trying to clean up the mess with piecemeal measures for urgent situations like Bombardier's. The government's decisions will be bad for a lot of people, such as Aveos workers, who thought they were being protected but who were suddenly thrown under the bus by the Liberal government for political reasons and incentives.

There is nothing for agriculture either even though there are some major problems right now, such as protecting supply management. We will see what the Liberals do during negotiations. Dairy and cheese producers were promised compensation in connection with the EU treaty, which is not yet in force, as well as the trans-Pacific partnership, the TPP. There is nothing about that in this budget, no mention of the compensation that was promised and that is vital to helping producers adapt to the new normal if the agreement is ratified.

There is also nothing in the budget on diafiltered milk, a serious situation that currently affects all dairy producers and farmers. There is absolutely nothing. The budget is far more than just a series of fiscal measures. This becomes clear when you really look at the entire document. It is also a statement of priorities, similar to a throne speech. The fact that there is no mention of some current issues that are crucial to the future of Canada's agricultural sector is extremely troubling.

Let us talk about employment insurance. Of course, the NDP has traditionally led the charge. I clearly remember my colleague Yvon Godin, who was well known as one of the greatest critics of Liberal and Conservative measures that restricted access to employment insurance. We promised to reverse the misguided reform brought in by the Conservative government in 2012.

The Liberals later realized that that might be a good idea and they said the same thing. In fact, when the Prime Minister was leader of the Liberal Party, during the election campaign, he was quoted in New Brunswick as saying that a Liberal government would reverse the unfair changes the Conservatives had made to the employment insurance system. The Liberals said they believed that the irresponsible changes made to EI punished workers and unfairly targeted seasonal workers.

I agree completely. That is exactly what we have been saying since 2012. What happened, then, in this budget? It contains only half-measures. Of course, certain elements have been reversed, and obviously we agree with that. One such measure forced unemployed workers to accept a job that paid only 70% of what they were earning before, regardless of their qualifications, and finally, we welcome the elimination of the obligation for unemployed workers to accept a job that is up to 100 km away from their home. These measures undermined and reduced accessibility and did a great disservice to rural regions, which obviously have suffered a demographic shock. If there is no work where they live, these people will have to move to where the jobs are.

That is pretty much everything.

• (1300)

[English]

One of the main measures in the budget, beside this one, is that 12 regions in the country will be given the possibility of an extension of five weeks in EI benefits. However, this measure existed prior to 2011. It was a pilot project that, depending on the rate of unemployment, allowed workers to have a five-week extension.

[Translation]

This closed what was called, in Quebec especially, the black hole, the period of time between the end of employment insurance benefits and a return to work, which is quite often the case for seasonal workers. Why is the government targeting 12 regions when this program, which was clearly part of the Conservatives' EI reform, was not applied to the whole country?

[English]

Atlantic Canada was shafted by this measure; there is no other word.

[Translation]

Quebec was also hurt by this measure. It applies only to northern Ontario and a few specific regions. There are even people in Alberta and Saskatchewan, depending on the community they live in, who are suffering the impact of the economic crisis. They are also being ignored and neglected.

[English]

I cannot conclude my speech without talking quickly about first nations.

The Budget

The Liberals fall short of many of their financial promises to first nations. For education, they spread \$2.6 billion over five years instead of what they promised, which was over four years. This means \$800 million less for education among first nations. For child welfare, and as Cindy Blackstock has said, the budget is \$130 million short of meeting the legal commitment set out by the human rights tribunal ruling that this program racially discriminated against indigenous children. There is a lack of money compared to the promises for post-secondary education.

Therefore, this budget, by and large, falls short of what the Liberals promised during the campaign.

[*Translation*]

That is why I am moving, seconded by the hon. member for Hochelaga, the following subamendment:

That the amendment be amended by deleting all the words after the words "because it:" and substituting the following:

"chooses to keep tax loopholes for CEOs and giveaways to profitable corporations over providing immediate help to struggling Canadians, fails to honour the government's promises to invest in health care, seniors, youth, and First Nations children, does not meaningfully improve access to Employment Insurance or close the black hole for seasonal workers, and lacks transparency; and is of the opinion that the Minister of Finance should amend his budgetary policy so that it actually delivers on the government's promises, and addresses income inequality in this country."

The Deputy Speaker: The amendment to the amendment is in order.

We will now move to questions and comments. The hon. member for Saint John—Rothesay.

• (1305)

[*English*]

Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothesay, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is great to be back in the House after our break. I certainly appreciate a lot of the member's points, his passion, and his delivery.

Let us be clear. Good governments govern and come up with policies for the many, not the few. Let us backtrack a bit to the election campaign that just happened and the NDP platform. Canadians did not buy a big part of its platform. At one point, the NDP platform was to have 30 to 40 more seats to form government. Canadians listened and gave it 30 to 40 seats.

The New Democrats talked about things such as a \$15-an-hour minimum wage, which was only for a very small percentage of Canadians, and \$15-a-day daycare that was not costed out in a lot of provinces, which were not going to buy in anyway. They preach austerity and balanced budgets and now they ask why we have not added this or not added that.

I have asked the party opposite many times about its insistence on the universal child care benefit and why it continues to push for equal payments to people who are making \$25,000 or people who are making hundreds of thousands of dollars. Liberals came forth with the Canada child benefit. Could the member opposite explain why the New Democrats continue to back the UCCB instead of the Canada child benefit?

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure if the member actually sees the irony in the question he has just asked. He said that

we should be governing for the many and not the few. That is exactly what I said in my speech. I said that the changes to employment insurance, especially the five-week extension, should apply to all regions where there are high levels of unemployment, as was the case before. The Liberal government chose to select 12 regions across the country, without knowing why these specific regions and not others. It does not make sense.

The Liberals, during the campaign, promised so much to everyone, especially Atlantic Canada. Why would they choose to reopen, which we welcome, the Coast Guard station in Kitsilano and not say anything about St. John's? Why do the members who come from Atlantic Canada not promote, as was promised, the reopening of the station in St. John's?

Because there are so many promises that have not been delivered on by the Liberal government after the election, I do not know where to start.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives have many disagreements with the NDP with respect to aspects of budgetary policy, but I appreciate that we both at least agree that it has to be paid for eventually. We have different ways of doing that, but the government seems to think it can keep borrowing and borrowing.

I want to ask the member specifically about income splitting, because this budget does away with income splitting, which is something I regard as a basic tax fairness measure. If two families make the same income, except the people earning the income are different, they should pay the same rate of tax.

I want to hear what the member thinks about income splitting. Is it not a basic tax fairness measure, that if two families have the same income, the same amount of tax should be paid?

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, that was actually at the heart of the debate on this issue in the last Parliament. While I recognize his point of view, I do not agree with it.

This measure is a regressive measure. If there are two spouses, one with a very high income and one with a low income, for example because he or she stays at home, and most of the time it is she who is at home, there is no incentive to actually work.

Moreover, this measure does nothing for couples or families needing that fiscal help. For example, for a couple where each member is earning \$25,000 or \$30,000 that is not a lot. It is at the lower end of what I would argue is the middle class. That couple would get nothing from this measure because it is not income splitting when people have basically the same wage. However, if only one of the two members of that household were working, it would definitely not be enough to make ends meet, especially with children. A couple without children would get nothing through the measure that was adopted by the Conservatives, and which is eliminated right now.

The measure was so regressive that had major implications for the fiscal health of the country. For that reason, we could do nothing but oppose it.

The Budget

•(1310)

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his analysis of the budget and what was in it and what was missing.

When we talk about child care, that money is fantastic for families because they need it, but it will do nothing to provide quality, affordable, accessible child care in their communities, particularly for people who work, or who have shift work or who need to cover those long periods of time when they are away from their children.

My colleague spoke eloquently about the things that were completely missing from the budget, such as agriculture, many of the commitments that were made around some of the trade agreements we faced, and the money that was simply not there for the supply managed sectors in our communities.

The other thing my colleague touched on was EI and how there were choices made about Canadians, about which Canadians deserved to be helped when they were at their most vulnerable and which did not. We were sent a clear message by the government about which communities in Canada would receive that money and the rest were left out.

I would like to ask my colleague about health care, which was left out completely from this budget. We talk about seniors and families at their most vulnerable needing access to health care, being able to get to health care, and having it be affordable. Could the member please speak about the absolute lack in this budget of the promises the government made during the campaign with respect to health care?

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, the question of my colleague from Essex is an excellent one. One of the commitments of the government during the campaign was that it would renegotiate a health accord with the provinces, which the previous government failed to do. It just implemented an end to the 6% escalator for transfers to the provinces on health, a transfer the provinces need, especially at a time when health care costs are increasing.

This measure by the Conservatives had a major impact on the fiscal capacity of provinces to deliver those services as well as other services. The parliamentary budget officer recognized that the federal government was giving itself a large margin for its own long-term sustainability that was impeding and threatening the fiscal sustainability of the provinces. That is a major problem, and I have not even talked about the delivery of services.

How can this budget be silent on the reduction of the escalator, which will be applied next year, and not say anything about the situation that will make the provincial finances very uncertain and will also threaten to diminish and decrease the quality of the health care services that Canadians have paid for and that they have the right to expect?

[*Translation*]

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the budget that we tabled a few weeks ago will help those most in need, seniors, the regions, and education. It will improve infrastructure and invest in Internet access and indigenous communities. It includes hundreds of pages of large and small changes that will benefit the country, which the former government

simply turned its back on. We have begun to resolve the problems left by the Conservative government, but we are not finished yet, because the Conservatives did a great deal of damage.

Does the member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques not find that the budget is an improvement? Even though the changes do not go as far as he would like, does he not support the investment programs, the changes, and the improvements that will help the poorest Canadians, our seniors, our young people, our infrastructure, and our indigenous communities?

There is still work to be done, but in the meantime, does the member think that opposing these progressive changes will help Canadians?

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question.

I hope he is not trying to say that the previous Conservative budgets set the bar for this budget. Obviously, it is an improvement over the budgets tabled by the Conservatives. We cannot deny that.

However, as the progressive opposition, our role is to ensure that this government, which made so many commitments and promises and created such high expectations among Canadians, keeps those promises in its major policies, particularly its budgets.

I took 20 minutes of my time to explain how the government failed to keep its promises to Canadians. I hope that the member will take note and change his list in order to take into consideration everything his party promised during the election campaign and everything it did not deliver in this budget.

•(1315)

[*English*]

Mr. James Maloney (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Malpeque.

Although this is not my first time standing in the House, it is the first formal speech I have the honour of delivering. I am very proud to do it in support of budget 2016, “Growing the Middle Class”, our government’s plan to deliver real change.

However, before I speak to the budget, I do have some general comments to make and some thanks to extend.

Let me say first what an honour it is to serve in the House. This body brings together so many people who have contributed to the framework of our great country. Over the next four years I look forward to what I know will be a new and more positive tone in the House.

In this vein, we need to work together, both sides of the House, to make those who sent us here proud that they did. Collectively, we need to earn back voters’ trust and respect. We need to move away from the nasty habit of judging ideas based simply on who came up with them. We need to engage in meaningful discussions and make sure that ideas are considered on the basis of being good or bad, better or worse. Ideas can be judged right or wrong, but they should never be judged right or left.

Please do not misunderstand me. Like my colleagues in the House, I will not hesitate to speak up when I think an idea is wrong, and I should say at this point that I think the budget is right.

The Budget

The list of people I need to thank is long, and I am going to miss many who have helped me get here today. Any success I have had in life is due more to the efforts of others than to my own. I need to thank my family, my campaign team, and my office staff, both here in Ottawa and, most importantly, back home in Etobicoke—Lakeshore.

I owe a debt of gratitude to my predecessors who have held this seat before me. They have all played a role in my success, and I would like to thank them.

The Hon. Jean Augustine occupied the Etobicoke—Lakeshore seat from 1993 until 2005. She did so with distinction and continues to be a mentor and role model for me. For some time, actually, she occupied your seat, Mr. Speaker, as deputy speaker, and just to be clear, I do not ever expect to be sitting in your seat.

From 2006 until 2011 the seat was occupied by Michael Ignatieff. He too served with distinction, honour, and integrity. Actually, he sat over there, and for the record, I do not ever want to sit over there.

Finally, during the last Parliament the seat was held by Bernard Trottier. I want to thank him for his service to our community, and although I am sincere in my gratitude and appreciation, I hope that neither he nor anyone else occupies this seat again at any time in the near future.

There is no chance at all that I would be standing here today were it not for my parents. They are the ones who taught me the value of public service and the importance of giving back to the community. They were the best role models a son could have.

My father was a member of the legal profession for over 50 years, first as a lawyer and later as a trial judge. His common sense, wisdom, and sense of fairness left a lasting impression on me. My mother, the late Marian Maloney, dedicated her life to community service and the advancement of women in society. She took her seat down the hall in the Senate chamber in 1999, where she continued her fight on the same issues she had dealt with for her entire life. She was a role model to me and to many women who have sat in the House. My mother, although she would never claim to be a pioneer, fought hard for what she believed in. She started the Judy LaMarsh Fund and ran it for 30 years. This was an organization dedicated to supporting women in politics and ensuring that they were given an equal opportunity to run.

I have a vivid memory of asking her, when I was much younger, why she worked so hard for the advancement of women's issues. She said something like "because it's 1985". She was clearly ahead of her time.

Of course I have to thank the voters of Etobicoke—Lakeshore for putting their trust in me last October. It is because of them that I stand here today to speak in support of budget 2016. I do so as I believe it sets an agenda for our government, and Canada, that is consistent with the goals and priorities of my community. It sets a course for growing the middle class.

● (1320)

The government promised to lower taxes for those who need it most, a promise that we have now kept. This budget will help the

middle class in this country get ahead and make it easier for others to join it.

I have lived in my riding for 40 years. Etobicoke—Lakeshore, like many communities in this country, is very diverse economically, culturally, and socially. It is home to middle-class families and those seeking to join it. It is home to Humber College, one of the great and flourishing post-secondary institutions in Canada. It is home to a significant and thriving manufacturing sector, including such companies as Fiat Chrysler—an industry with a large footprint in our riding—the Campbell's soup company, and the Canadian film industry, which I am very proud to represent.

All of these organizations provide employment and opportunity not only for the residents of Etobicoke—Lakeshore but also for people throughout the greater Toronto area. Ours is a riding with strong local identities in Alderwood, New Toronto, Long Branch, The Kingsway, and Mimico, which I should note is home to four recent Stanley Cups, although I have to point out none of them was won by the Toronto Maple Leafs.

Etobicoke—Lakeshore is a vibrant community, but there exists a major infrastructure deficit that needs to be addressed. For a short time, I was a member of Toronto City Council and saw first-hand the challenges faced by this municipality. I would like to pause at this point and voice my condolences to the family of Rob Ford. He was a vocal and principled advocate whom I had a chance to work with, as I mentioned, and he will be missed.

My riding is home to some of the most significant development seen in the past century. In the south part of the riding is the community of Humber Bay Shores. The population of this neighbourhood will reach upwards of 40,000 within the next few years, and 20 years ago it did not exist. Although this community has grown rapidly, the infrastructure has not kept pace. This is why I am so proud to be part of a government that is making an unprecedented commitment to new infrastructure.

Budget 2016 launches our commitment to spend the unprecedented amount of \$120 billion in support of such things as public transit and housing infrastructure. This will help communities like Humber Bay Shores reach their potential. When I moved to Toronto 40 years ago, the transit map looked almost identical to what we see now. This is unacceptable. The Humber Bay Shores community is the equivalent of dropping the city of North Bay into a six-block radius without offering any new transit solutions. This is completely unacceptable.

This is why I will remain steadfast as an advocate on transit issues, including a transit hub in this emerging neighbourhood. I am very proud that with budget 2016, this government has made bold infrastructure commitments while also investing in building a stronger, greener, and more prosperous country.

The Budget

In my riding, housing prices have risen exponentially. Values have risen to 15 or 20 times over what they were 40 years ago. The people living in these houses are not making 15 or 20 times what they were then. The government should always encourage growth, but with a measure of fairness and equality. That is what this government is doing. The government cannot wave a magic wand and fix all the problems, but I believe we are here to give Canadians a break and an opportunity to help them not only to keep up but to get ahead.

One goal I have is to work closely with the other levels of government. My job is to get things done, not take credit for things others have done. In the past few months I have met with and talked to many constituents. I have taken part in pre-budget consultations, town hall meetings, and office drop-ins. Whether it was tax cuts, support for the environment, or the settlement of refugees, without exception they all expressed views that are 100% consistent with this budget.

To conclude, there are many people elected to the House with far more compelling stories than mine. Mine is quite simple. When I was a child, first in Thunder Bay where I was born—and I would like to add that I am very pleased to see two new MPs on this side of the House from Thunder Bay—and later in my current home of Etobicoke—Lakeshore, where I have lived for 40 years, life was much simpler. It was a time when lawyers or politicians were assumed to be honest and honourable members of society. Sadly, I am not sure we can still say that. I say that as a member of both professions.

I come from the legal profession and I have now entered this world. My goal is this: when I leave this place, hopefully many years from now, people will look more favourably on those in this House and this profession because we debated issues based on their merit, not their source. If that happens, I will feel that I have accomplished my goal.

I believe that budget 2016 is a big first step in accomplishing this goal.

•(1325)

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member on his first speech in this House. It was very well done.

I would like to ask a very simple question. What is he most proud of in this budget?

Mr. James Maloney: I would say fairness, Mr. Speaker. The budget does exactly what this government promised to do during the course of the election. We promised to support the people who needed the support the most. We needed to help people get ahead. Governments are not there to fix all problems, as I said, but they are there to give people who need help the breaks they need to get ahead. That is what this budget does in the form of tax cuts and infrastructure spending. This is an investment that is going to pay off long down the road.

Governments for too long have been thinking four years ahead instead of 40 years ahead. In my opinion, this budget changes that course. We are looking down the road. We are thinking of the future of Canadians, not the future of the people sitting in this room.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would also like to congratulate the member on his election and his first speech in this House.

There are a few areas on which I would like to hear him speak a bit further.

He talked about this budget delivering what the Liberals promised. When he was on the campaign trail, did he tell his constituents that it was going to be a \$10-billion deficit? Did he tell his constituents that this was going to be a short-term deficit and they were going to get back to a balanced budget? Did he tell his constituents that the middle class was in desperate straits but not allude to the fact that between 2005 to the current day the middle class is actually doing much better than it has done throughout Canadian history?

He talks about the credibility of politicians, but I have to ask him, did he tell his constituents that those were the commitments of his party? How is he going to explain to his constituents now how the Liberal Party broke so many important fiscal promises?

Mr. James Maloney: Mr. Speaker, what I told my constituents when I was on the campaign trail last year were the facts, the truth, and the information we were provided. We told the voters that we were going to be delivering a budget that included a deficit. We told them what we were going to do based upon the facts and evidence that we were provided going into the election campaign. Sadly, some of those facts turned out to be inaccurate. We inherited a fiscal situation that was drastically different from that which was presented by the now opposition party, the former government.

We have been transparent, which is why in the first several months of this administration we opened the books and let the public know exactly what the fiscal situation was so there would no longer be any surprises.

I am very proud to stand here and say that I told my constituents, the voters in Etobicoke—Lakeshore, the truth.

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out to the hon. member that the Liberals broke a promise to invest \$3 billion over four years in health care. There is no mention of that in this budget.

I would like to hear what the actual commitments are now, if there is indeed a different story from when he was campaigning on facts until now. Why is he now abandoning the concept of health care that was campaigned on and which resonated with Canadians?

•(1330)

Mr. James Maloney: Mr. Speaker, we spoke about health care during the campaign. We have talked about health care since the election. What we have done is we have had a first ministers conference to talk to the provinces about delivering better health care in this country, something which has not been done for a decade.

People on this side of the House are very proud of their record on health care in this country. We are going to work very hard. Canadians had our commitment during the election and they have our commitment now to continue working with the provinces and the first ministers across the country to deliver better health care. So, we are actually on agreement on that.

The Budget

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it gives me pleasure to speak to the budget entitled "Growing the Middle Class".

Let me start with a quote from the Minister of Finance himself. He really summed it all up in his opening remarks. He said:

Today, we begin to restore hope for the middle class. Today, we begin to revitalize the economy. Today, we begin a long-term plan that will use smart investments and an unwavering belief that progress is possible to ensure that Canada's best days lie ahead.

As I said, that really sums up what this budget is all about. It sums up the objective of the budget. However, the budget is made all the more difficult by what the previous government has left us, or has left us without. Program after program was cut by the previous government. Earlier, the Leader of the Opposition talked about how the Conservative government had a surplus. No it did not. That was a surplus on a monthly basis, but accounting is usually done over the long term. The Conservatives left this country with \$160 billion of added debt imposed on every citizen in this country. Not only did they leave us with debt, as I said, but they also cut programs and services. Even worse, they created disunity in the country.

If we are going to bring Canada ahead as a federation, we need to have a government that is willing to work with the provinces, to work together to grow the economy, to put in programs that we can utilize together to create growth in the economy and jobs for Canadians.

In reality, the budget builds on the measures introduced in December which provided a middle-class tax cut. We are dealing with that now with Bill C-2. Really what that did is bring better balance to the taxation system by giving those in the middle class a tax break and balancing that by taking a little more from those who can afford it. This budget builds on that commitment.

One of the key parts of this budget is looking to the future. That is done with the Canada child benefit, assisting those families in raising their children, giving them better opportunities to spend money where it is needed. The Canada child benefit will replace the current complicated child benefit system.

The Canada child benefit will provide a maximum annual benefit of up to \$6,400 per child under the age of six, and up to \$5,400 per child for those ages six through 17. Families with less than \$30,000 in net income will receive the maximum benefit. Nine out of 10 families will receive more child benefits under this program than under the current system. Specifically in my own province of Prince Edward Island, they will receive \$47 million more in child benefits during the 2016-17 and 2017-18 period. That is a benefit to families. It is putting the money where the resources should be put.

Not only are we dealing with families, but we are also dealing with the education of students so that we build for the future down the road. We are making post-secondary education more affordable through this budget. We are enhancing Canada student grants to give young people the opportunity to be able to afford to go to university and college.

Budget 2016 proposes to increase Canada student grants by 50%, from \$2,000 to \$3,000 per year for students from low-income families, from \$800 to \$1,200 per year for students from middle-income families, and from \$1,200 to \$1,800 per year for part-time

students. We are not only building on the very young people, but we are building the education system as well for all Canadians.

● (1335)

I know this area is a little controversial, but for all Canadians we are improving the safety net for those who find themselves in difficult times as a result of being out of work. We are improving the employment insurance system after the disastrous way it was handled by the previous government.

We are expanding access to new entrants and re-entrants by dropping the 910 hours' entrance requirement to whatever the regional rate is. We are reducing the two-week waiting period to one week. We are improving the program for working while on claim. That is extremely controversial. It was extremely controversial in my area, because under the previous government's system, a person was penalized for going to work. Even people who were on maternity leave were penalized for going to work and keeping up their skills, especially those who worked in a hospital setting for one day a week while on maternity leave.

I do not mind admitting that there is some controversy around the next point I will make, and that is extending the five-week pilot project to those areas that were hardest hit by the downturn in the economy. I would say there is some controversy in my own region over that because that five weeks was not applied in that particular region, but it is targeted to those areas which have been greatly impacted by the downturn in some of the commodities in the marketplace.

The minister has committed to look at that into the future. The minister has committed to review the employment insurance system and those measures going down the road. I look forward to that review, to ensure that we get fairness and equity throughout the total measures around employment insurance in this country.

We improved the safety net for those finding themselves out of work. I do not have the time available to go into it, but we do look beyond employment insurance and we are investing in skills and training. We are enhancing the investments in training itself, strengthening the union-based apprenticeship training, supporting flexible work arrangements, and improving labour market information for Canadians. We are trying to put that workforce in a place where their skills will be needed in the future and expand on those skills to grow the economy.

The Budget

However, it is not enough to deal with today's reality. We are looking at the long-term future. During the election campaign we talked a lot about investment in infrastructure. While we are looking at \$11.9 billion over five years starting right away, budget 2016 puts this plan into action with an immediate down payment on this plan: \$3.4 billion over three years to upgrade and improve public transit systems across Canada; \$5 billion over five years for investments in water, waste-water, and green infrastructure; \$3.4 billion over five years for social infrastructure, including affordable housing, early learning and child care, cultural and recreational infrastructure, and community health care facilities.

We are investing in the future. Specifically in my comments I should make this point: Major transfers to Prince Edward Island will total \$582 million in 2016-17, an increase of \$29 million from the previous year; \$380 million through equalization, an increase of \$19 million from last year; \$147 million through the Canada health transfer, an increase of \$8 million from the previous year; \$54 million through the Canada social transfer, an increase of \$1.6 million from the previous year.

My point is, my province benefits from this budget in terms of the transfers, in terms of the programs, and Canada as a whole can look to the future with opportunity and excitement because of what this budget does.

● (1340)

It addresses the problems created by the previous government and puts in place investments in families, infrastructure, education, and skills training, which is what Canadians really need to grow, with opportunity and the hope for prosperity in the future. That is what the Minister of Finance has done in this budget. I ask everyone in this House to be supportive of that to help build Canada's future.

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

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a brief point of order. I think that nothing is as critical in this place as the ability to debate issues as important as the budget. I find it disturbing—and I do not know if there is anything that can be done about it—that the construction noise is so loud that it vibrates through our desks and reverberates through our brains. I have missed much of what the hon. member for Malpeque was trying to say, and I do not know if anything can be done.

The Deputy Speaker: I do not know whether that is a point of order or not. I take the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands' comments under advisement. We will see what can be done.

We are all aware, of course, that Parliament Hill is the subject of a considerable renovation program. I encourage members to adjust their audio control as they may need to with these distractions, and we will certainly do our best. However, I will take the hon. member's comments under advisement.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Milton.

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when I was a minister in the former government, I had many conversations with the member opposite, and with the people of Prince Edward Island through their elected representatives, with respect to ensuring that they had secondary sources of energy through an electrical cable that

would attach Prince Edward Island to the mainland in New Brunswick. There was much lobbying about it. There was a great business case put forward, because it was an important piece of infrastructure that was needed. I find it interesting that the hon. member stood today to talk about everything he received for Prince Edward Island. I would also say that they understood, at that point in time, the importance of having this extra piece of infrastructure to ensure they had an energy supply.

At the end of the day, my question to the member, who is the chairman of the finance committee, is this. Knowing as much as he knows about the importance of energy to the maritime provinces and to Atlantic Canada, can he tell the House right now that he is firmly in support of the energy east pipeline for the other provinces in Atlantic Canada, and that he will vigorously lobby the Minister of Natural Resources and the Minister of Environment and Climate Change to ensure that this will be built quickly?

Hon. Wayne Easter: Mr. Speaker, the member for Milton talked about the electric cable. That is a very important infrastructure project for Prince Edward Island. It gives us the opportunity to import hydro electricity from the grid on the mainland when we need it. It also gives us the opportunity to export energy from our windmills on Prince Edward Island when they are producing more than is needed. Close to 30% of our energy in Prince Edward Island now comes from the renewable energy created by those windmills.

I would also say that one of the sad points with respect to that cable was that a commitment had been made by the previous Paul Martin government for the federal government to pay 100% of the cost of that cable, which was just prior to the previous Conservative government coming into place, and that was the very first proposal it cut.

With respect to the energy east pipeline, I fully support it as a member of Parliament, and we need it right across this country.

● (1345)

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the hon. member to ruminate a bit with respect to the ad nauseam infrastructure funding that has been described as a key campaign issue and that has been reflected in the budget. My concern is that there is no mention of ensuring that small and rural communities would have their fair share of that. I wonder if the member could explain if there are any measures that he foresees being put in place or if there is a commitment that there would be fair and equitable funding among this shortchanged pot.

Hon. Wayne Easter: Mr. Speaker, I certainly would not say it is a shortchanged pot when it comes to infrastructure. It is the biggest infrastructure spending announcement that any federal government has ever made. As we said, it is looking at the future. It is looking at transit infrastructure, physical infrastructure, and social and green infrastructure. Therefore, it is a very comprehensive proposal by the government.

The Budget

Of course, it is extremely important that rural communities, be they small or medium sized, get their fair share out of that infrastructure money. I think it has been outlined by the previous minister, including the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, that as the program rolls out it is the intent that it will be shared by small, medium, and large municipalities across Canada, so that all Canadians can benefit from the good investments that this Liberal government is making.

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I am very pleased to be sharing my time with my friend the member for Brantford—Brant.

A couple of weeks ago, the Minister of Finance was trying on his new shoes for the budget, and I can appreciate the need for new shoes, personally speaking. However, the finance minister did it at the Boys and Girls Club in Toronto, which is a place that is very well known for teaching life lessons and giving kids a good foundation. I felt a sense of irony when the minister chose this spot to talk about his plan for the Liberal budget, because it is a plan that actually commits Canadians to long-term structural deficits, and it is the future generations in that room who will be paying for it. While the Liberals struggle with the notion that, if they borrow money, some day they have to pay it back, kids understand very well that when one lends something, there is an expectation that it will be given back one day.

Before the Liberals took office, taxes in this country were at their lowest point in 50 years. By the end of the Conservative mandate, the average family of four in Milton was saving \$7,000 per year, our debt-to-GDP ratio was actually lower than when the Conservatives took office, and it has been confirmed by the good people at Finance Canada that we left the government with a balanced budget and a surplus, to the point of \$4.3 billion. However, as with all things, times have changed.

One of the first things the Liberal government did since taking office was actually undo the advances the Conservatives had made over the past 10 years. In doing so, it completely abandoned its election promise to cap its deficit at \$10 billion. It decided it was no longer important to aim for a balanced budget, and I am sure that when it is pressed, it will also reverse on the debt-to-GDP ratio.

The Liberal budget, as presented, is very disconcerting, and Canadians cannot actually comprehend what the Liberal government is attempting to do in this plan and how it tries to justify it. The finance minister's last economic outlook actually showed that revenues were holding up better than expected. GDP growth in the last quarter of 2015 was also higher than expected. Canada is not in a recession, yet the Liberal government is on track to borrow millions and billions of dollars in order to solve a recession that is not happening.

Plans for this spending spree confirm what Conservatives have long believed: Liberals are more concerned about optics than they are with helping Canadians. The budget sets out spending that is untargeted, and this spending will actually end up hurting Canadians in the long run in the form of tax increases. The budget is nothing more than a betrayal of the middle class, because Conservatives understand that, if the Liberals are not willing to control spending,

taxes will eventually go up to pay for the money that has been borrowed.

It is a betrayal of families, because they understand that their household budgets cannot be sustained on credit. As well, it is a betrayal of small businesses, the 1.2 million Canadian men and women who were promised relief by every party in the election campaign, because that relief leads to job creation and solid economic investments. It was the Liberal government that turned on them. In addition, it is a betrayal of Canadians who trusted the Liberals not only to keep the promise to small business, because that is where 98% of the economy is, but to keep their election promises.

I originally come from Cape Breton Island, where unfortunately I learned a thing or two about unemployment, the long-term effects, and what happens when Liberals try to fix our problems. There are more than 100,000 Canadians out of work today in the oil and gas industry alone. In a recent poll, Canadians across the country said very clearly—46% of them, actually—that they are concerned for either their own jobs or the jobs of others in their households. Those 46% of Canadians live with the weight in their minds and hearts of whether they are going to have jobs.

Families need to see a real plan to ensure that we are creating well-paying jobs. However, what they are seeing instead is small business being saddled with an increase in payroll taxes, as well as the provinces being encouraged to introduce a carbon tax. Both of these are job-killing measures that discourage investment in our economy.

• (1350)

In the last two weeks, we have had the ability to speak with folks in our ridings, and some of us have spoken to folks in their ridings as well. The one question I get is this: “What did they buy with \$30 billion of our money?” I cannot blame people for being confused. Canadians are seeing money fly out the door with no assurance that they are going to get value. However, here is the best part. The Liberals call it investments, when we know it is spending.

Canadians are not the only ones who are confused, it would appear. Last week, the parliamentary budget officer released a scathing response, providing proof that the budget is not only overinflated, not only an overestimation, but it is not transparent. Is that not a far cry from what the Liberals offered on the campaign trail? The PBO pointed to a massive hole in the budget and asked this very pertinent question: How is the government going to fill it? The response, just like now, is silence, because there is no response.

Statements by Members

It is mind-boggling to Canadians that the government has planned deficits of \$115 billion over the next five years and it has yet to decide what it is going to spend it on. Since the campaign, the Liberals have been forced to admit that their math has been wrong. They miscalculated the price of their own tax plan. They miscalculated the size of their own deficits. As well, as if it is not bad enough that Canadians do not have confidence in their math, the Liberals suggest continually, including today, that we should not trust the math prepared by the officials at Finance Canada that shows we left a surplus.

It is no wonder that Canadians are worried. The Liberals have clearly demonstrated that they have an inability to make the hard choices that governing requires. They have demonstrated an even greater inability to provide measures for Canadians that will actually help them.

The Conservatives found themselves in a tough economic situation, the great recession. That is why we had a plan to return to balance, to live within our means. We achieved that in 2015.

I was opposed to a modest \$10-billion budget, and I said that during the election campaign. Had the Liberals actually kept that pledge, we would have ensured that every single cent went to encouraging job creation. However, that number was a dream compared to the nightmare scenario we are looking at today.

Uncontrolled spending will inevitably lead to long-term structural deficits that are simply unsustainable. Some economists go as far as to say that it is \$150 billion in new debt over the next four years alone. Now the Liberals say that the only thing that matters is debt-to-GDP ratio, but that is not true. The only thing that can be controlled in debt-to-GDP ratio by the government is the debt. It cannot control growth, and it certainly cannot control interest rates.

Why does the government not focus on the things that it can influence? Those are creating proper incentives to stimulate economic growth, watching the debt, and ensuring we are not increasing departmental sizes to the point where they become unsustainable.

I have one final word with respect to the budget, and it is a word that we have difficulty with on our side of the House. However, it is definitely not a difficulty on the other side of the House, and that comes to taxes. As I pointed out already, we strove to reduce taxes because we know that is what we do to spur economic growth and have companies create jobs. The government has set it up so that the Liberals' tax increases have moved a tax rate in Canada above 50%. In some provinces, as in Ontario, people are paying 53.5% in income tax to the government before they get to keep any of their money. However, that is not all. The Liberals broke their promise to small business, 1.2 million Canadians, on their taxes. The Liberals are also encouraging carbon taxes, and employers are going to be left with no choice but to look at their stock of employees and determine who will lose their jobs.

It is in times like this that it is important for us to be responsible, to live within our means, and to have a plan. However, this budget is unconstrained. It is haphazard spending. It is not economic stimulus. Any long-term benefits will be outweighed by the enormous literal costs, and as such it must be firmly opposed.

●(1355)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Milton will have five minutes for questions and comments when the House next returns to debate on the question.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

JEAN LAPIERRE

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on March 29, all of Quebec was shocked by the tragedy in the Magdalen Islands. On behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I wish to extend my heartfelt condolences to the families and friends of the seven victims of that terrible accident.

I am not exaggerating when I say that Quebecers across the province are thinking of them. It is important to me to pay tribute to Jean Lapierre, who was killed in the accident.

Jean Lapierre is well known in the House of Commons. He was elected five times and represented two parties, including the Bloc Québécois. However, he made a name for himself and was known above all in his home province, Quebec, where he was a brilliant political analyst known for his knowledge of a range of issues and his legendary and colourful eloquence, which won over Quebecers of all political stripes.

His morning radio segment tuned us in to what was on the minds of Quebecers and Canadians on a daily basis.

Thank you, Jean.

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[*English*]

CITIZENS OF MISSISSAUGA—LAKESHORE

Mr. Sven Spengemann (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honour an incredible team, Dr. Iggy Kaneff and his wife Mrs. Didi Kaneff, long-time residents of my riding of Mississauga—Lakeshore.

When Dr. Kaneff arrived from Bulgaria in 1951, he was nearly penniless and did not speak any English. Through exemplary hard work and a strong entrepreneurial spirit, Iggy has since become one of Canada's most successful real estate developers and patron of the sport of golf.

In recognition of his business achievements and philanthropic efforts, Dr. Kaneff has received numerous high honours over the last 65 years, among these prominently, the Order of Ontario.

Eight years after arriving in Canada, also from Bulgaria, Didi Kaneff founded the Ignat Kaneff Charitable Foundation in 1986. Didi Kaneff is a community leader in her own right, who tirelessly champions the arts, local charities, hospitals, and health and social services.

Statements by Members

I ask all members of the House to join me in honouring and acknowledging the truly remarkable and inspiring achievements of Dr. and Mrs. Kaneff.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

* * *

● (1400)

GEORGE LANE

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to honour a great Albertan, George Lane.

George Lane was a legendary rancher and, as a member of the Big Four, a founding father of the Calgary Stampede. He was a former owner of the Bar U Ranch, the national historic site in my riding of Foothills. It is still a living tribute to our Canadian cattle industry.

George Lane epitomized the western spirit: a tireless work ethic, a community leader, and a visionary entrepreneur.

This weekend, George Lane will be inducted into the prestigious hall of great westerners at the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum in Oklahoma City. This is considered among the greatest honours in western culture, and he will be the first Canadian ever inducted into the hall.

I look forward to joining fellow Albertans this weekend in Oklahoma to honour George Lane's outstanding achievements. This is also a great opportunity to celebrate the heart and soul of Alberta, our rich ranching history.

* * *

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. T.J. Harvey (Tobique—Mactaquac, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was recently asked to give the opening remarks at the Canadian Young Farmers' Forum conference in Vancouver. The conference was titled "Farm Together-Agriculture United". As demonstrated through the budget, this government shares the same vision: supporting science, investing in innovation, and working with industry partners to contribute to the growth and development of Canada's agriculture and agri-food sector as a priority.

Canadian farmers are a hard-working and innovative group, and the farmers in my riding of Tobique—Mactaquac are no exception. However, rural Canadians rely heavily on the agriculture sector for economic opportunities and want to see policy that not only supports agriculture producers but allows them to flourish. Investment in exploring specific strategies to further economic growth and diversification in these sectors is crucial to ensuring that producers in my riding and across Canada continue to thrive as leaders in the agricultural sector.

Information sharing and working together will pave the way to ensuring that our agricultural sector is competitive, innovative, and continually sustainable.

[*Translation*]

TAX HAVENS

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Panama papers exposed the rampant abuse of tax havens.

These notorious revelations, the largest information leak of its kind in history, make it clear that it is high time the Government of Canada took meaningful action to put an end to this kind of scheme, recovered the money that was diverted, and took legal action against the fraudsters.

Furthermore, Canadians are demanding real change to our country's laws. They want the government to restore a tax regime that is fair for all, regardless of their income, which means prohibiting secret amnesty deals or discount agreements for the rich; reviewing the agreements Canada signed with some tax havens; and allocating more resources to the Canada Revenue Agency to investigate and combat tax evasion.

If the government does not intervene, the wealthy will continue to profit from our lenient tax laws. The Liberal government must propose legislative amendments as soon as possible to eliminate these loopholes and to combat tax evasion.

As honest Canadians are filling out their tax returns, now is the time to crack down on these profiteers once and for all.

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[*English*]

COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARDS

Mr. Jati Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to congratulate the winners of the District of Mission Community Service Awards.

I had the pleasure of attending the awards ceremony last Thursday, where remarkable individuals and organizations were recognized for their contributions to our community. The award winners have demonstrated exemplary volunteerism in the community through a wide range of charitable activity. Their high level of commitment is an example for all.

I am proud to take this opportunity to recognize these residents for being exceptional leaders. I would like to thank them for their outstanding service to our community.

* * *

● (1405)

WINE INDUSTRY

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, 25 years after the Canadian wine industry underwent a major transformation, hundreds of Canadian wineries make high quality, international award-winning wine. The economic impact of the Canadian wine industry now is roughly \$7 billion dollars.

There is something that has not kept pace with this growth.

In 1994, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency put in place a guideline that was to be an interim measure that in effect would allow wine producers to bypass country of origin labelling. The “Cellared in Canada” designation allows wines made from non-Canadian grapes to carry the Canadian brand. These wines have limited, if any, connection to Canadian land, or its terroir.

Just as we would take issue with consumers being sold counterfeit goods like a generic cola with a Pepsi label on it, we should take issue with non-Canadian wines being sold as a Canadian product.

As such, I urge the Standing Committee on Agriculture to study the effects of this out-of-date, misleading designation and recommend changes to this policy that would be fair for all Canadian wine producers.

* * *

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO SCARBOROUGH CAMPUS

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Scarborough—Rouge Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, great things are happening at the University of Toronto Scarborough campus. In less than two years, UTSC has added two new amazing facilities that students will be able to enjoy over the coming years.

Last summer, UTSC hosted the Pan Am games at the newly built, state-of-the-art Pan Am Centre. This sports centre has received international praise and is already attracting other multi-sport events to our community. In 2017, the Invictus games for injured veterans will take place at UTSC.

Earlier this year, I was proud to take part in the opening of the new environmental science and chemistry building. It was inspiring to see the passion of the world-class faculty and over 200 graduate and Ph. D. students who would bring this building to life.

These facilities have become centres of thought and athletics in our city and are part of a much grander vision for UTSC as a hub for renewal in Scarborough.

I want to congratulate Principal Bruce Kidd, faculty, staff, and students on these achievements.

* * *

KHALSA DAY

Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, *waheguru ji ka khalsa. Waheguru ji ki fateh.*

The Sikh community in Canada today is celebrating Khalsa Day. It is a day of great joy and happiness. It all comes from the day Guru Gobind Singh Ji originated the Khalsa panth, the equality of all Sikhs, the importance of sacrifice for the greater good, and the teachings that we share as our values. It is also the time we celebrate how the harvest becomes golden brown.

The history of our religion and culture makes us unique but also more united. I am proud to be a Sikh MP, along with all the other Sikh MPs and ministers, the most in Canadian history. Sikh history, culture, and religion are being celebrated in places across the country, like in my riding of Brampton South.

On behalf of all Brampton MPs, I wish all Sikhs across Canada a very happy Vaisakhi and a happy Khalsa Day.

Statements by Members

Waheguru ji ka khalsa. Waheguru ji ki fateh.

* * *

INCOME SPLITTING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, income splitting is a basic tax fairness measure. It means that two families with the same family income pay the same amount of tax.

Our government believed that all families deserved tax cuts and deserved equal treatment under the tax code regardless of their child care choices. We did not believe that a family should pay higher taxes just because it made the sacrifice to spend time off work at home.

In my riding, I know many families that make these kinds of sacrifices. Moms and dads, some professionally trained, are making sacrifices to do what they feel is best for their kids. We should not tell parents how to raise their children, but we should respect their choices and honour all of those who sacrifice for their kids.

It is unfair that the budget does away with this vital tax fairness measure. Families in my riding want me to oppose the budget because it raises their taxes. They can be assured that this is exactly what we will do.

* * *

[*Translation*]

RWANDAN GENOCIDE

Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette (Winnipeg Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this week marks the 22nd anniversary of the Rwandan genocide. We wish to honour the memory of the hundreds of thousands of people killed by unprecedented violence that stemmed from identity policies, but we also want to take this opportunity to highlight the progress that has been made.

I want to underscore the work done by the people of Rwanda and Burundi to overcome ethnic divisions and tribal loyalties. Although this work has only just begun, as an aboriginal Canadian, I encourage the Rwandan and Burundian leaders to draw inspiration from the efforts being made by their fellow citizens to build modern nation states that respect human rights, human dignity, democracy, and the rule of law, and that will be an example for the rest of the world to follow.

[*Member spoke in Kinyarwanda as follows:*]

Murakoze.

* * *

● (1410)

VAISAKHI

Ms. Anju Dhillon (Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today we celebrate Vaisakhi, the first time the Sikhs were baptized.

Statements by Members

One of the important aspects of this day is the reaffirmation of the equality of the sexes, as proclaimed by the first guru. When the 10th guru of the Sikhs, Guru Gobind Singh, created the holy baptismal nectar, a woman was also involved. He called her *jagat mata*, the mother of all humanity. Her equal contribution underscored for the guru the importance of treating everyone equally. Both men and women prepare the holy nectar.

The guru then asked all men to bear the name *Singh*, which means lion, and women to bear the name *Kaur*, which means princess. This meant that the men had to respect every woman as they would a princess and revere women because without women there would not be any men. Guruji declared that all women are individuals and free to lead their own lives and do as they wish, such as become warriors or priestesses, if that is what they choose, and that all women are *kaur*.

[Member spoke in Punjabi as follows:]

So kio manda aakheeyai jit jamaai raajaan.

* * *

[English]

OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Grande Prairie—Mackenzie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the oil and gas industry is an essential part of Alberta's economy. I am proud of that industry and I am proud of the people who work there.

Over the past number of months, we have seen over 100,000 hard-working Albertans lose their jobs. The Liberals have failed Alberta families.

The government could have announced in its budget a plan to approve energy east, the trans mountain pipeline, or new LNG projects, but it did not.

Energy east would not only create more Canadian jobs, but it would also allow Canadians to use Canadian oil. In 2013, Canada paid \$26.3 billion to import foreign oil. That is over 42% of the oil that Canadians use. What is more is that these projects would not cost the government anything. In fact, they would lead to more government revenues that could be used to pay for better education, better health care, and better infrastructure for all Canadians.

It is time for the Liberal government to reverse its opposition to pipelines. It is time for the Liberal government to stop making life more difficult for Alberta families. It is time for the Liberals to start defending opportunity, prosperity and hope for all Canadians.

* * *

PRIMATOLOGY AND CONSERVATION

Mr. William Amos (Pontiac, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of so many Canadians to express my profound gratitude to Dr. Jane Goodall, the world-renowned primatologist and conservation activist.

From Dr. Goodall's trail-blazing chimpanzee research to her ongoing "Roots and Shoots" youth education initiative, her positive influence spans geography, cultures, and generations.

[Translation]

When she talks about conservation and habitat destruction, she advocates with compassion for those who cannot speak for themselves.

[English]

As she once said, "I truly believe that only when we work with head and the heart, that change can occur... We can think of the big impact our small choices can make."

Dr. Goodall's message of hope knows no partisan boundaries. This afternoon at the reception we are co-hosting with other members of Parliament, I am so excited to ask her how the democratic debates that she hears in the House compare with the dispute resolution she has heard for so many years with the chimps in Tanzania. I fear that we will suffer by comparison.

* * *

KEVIN STUBBINGTON

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I pay tribute today to Kevin Stubbington, a truly inspirational man from my community who recently passed away at the age of 64.

Mr. Stubbington was instrumental in initiating the safety towards other players, STOP, program, an awareness campaign highlighting the dangers of checking from behind in hockey.

The simple idea of the incorporation of a stop sign patch placed on the back of every jersey continues to be an effective plan for players to make the game of hockey safer. The STOP program is now mandatory in many hockey associations across this world.

As a volunteer coach with the Windsor Minor Hockey Association, I know that protecting the safety of players and minimizing serious injuries, especially concussions, is so important. I am proud the member for the Windsor—Tecumseh is continuing this legacy.

Mr. Stubbington was a great inspiration and will continue to be missed by the entire community. He made life safer for countless youths, while the sport that Canadians love can be enjoyed and played in safety.

* * *

●(1415)

[Translation]

JEAN LAPIERRE

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on March 29, a terrible tragedy took place in the Magdalen Islands. It claimed the life of my friend. Many of us lost a friend or former colleague. Quebeckers lost a man who listened to them, and Canadians lost an exceptional human being.

Oral Questions

Jean Lapierre was passionate about politics and cared deeply about people. Elected to Canada's Parliament at 23 years of age, he began to pursue his passion and ambition early in life. Over the course of his career, Canadians came to know him as an outstanding communicator who made politics accessible and certainly made our world more accessible and easier to understand.

On a personal level, I appreciated his energy and honesty. Although I did not always like the comments he shared with me, I appreciated them because he always said what he was thinking, and he did so sincerely and with conviction.

We all know that Jean Lapierre was a great Magdalen Islander. Throughout his entire life, he did his work with dignity and dedication. His sole purpose was to serve the people well.

On behalf of all members of the official opposition, I humbly offer my most sincere condolences to the families of the seven who lost their lives. Of course, our thoughts, prayers, and sympathy go out to Jean Lapierre's mother in particular. Until we meet again, Jean.

* * *

JEAN LAPIERRE

Mr. Pierre Breton (Shefford, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would also like to pay tribute to Jean Lapierre, who left us far too soon under tragic circumstances on March 29.

Our thoughts and sympathies are with his family and friends.

Jean Lapierre was a popular man of the people. He served as the MP for my riding of Shefford from 1979 to 1992 and was the youngest minister in the history of the House of Commons. Our paths crossed 35 years ago and he helped me to take my first steps toward politics. Jean, thank you for your sage advice, for sharing your thoughts and opinions with me, and for putting your trust in me. I will always remember you as a great friend and mentor with incredible political acumen. We had many good times together.

An optimistic man with a love for life, you always had something positive to say. You were in touch with Canadians, influential, an excellent communicator, and a tireless worker who made politics easier to understand and more accessible for people.

Farewell, Jean. You will be missed.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

CONSULAR AFFAIRS

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Alison Azer's four children were kidnapped and are now thought to be in Mahabad, Iran. She has been in touch with the RCMP but is extremely frustrated with the lack of response from the government. She is worried that her daughters may be subjected to female genital mutilation and that her older son may be sent to a madrassa.

We understand, based upon communications between our offices, that the Minister of Foreign Affairs is open to a meeting.

Would the minister confirm today that he will meet with Mrs. Azer?

Mr. Omar Alghabra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Consular Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the safety and well-being of the Azer family continues to be a priority of this government. As I have done before, the Minister of Foreign Affairs would be happy to meet with Ms. Azer to continue collaboration in the pursuit of the safe return of her children to Canada. Canadian consular officials and law enforcement agencies continue to work domestically and internationally with the relevant agencies to make sure that we return the kids home safely.

* * *

TAXATION

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, small business owners are hard-working, middle-class Canadians, but the Liberals have betrayed them. The Liberal promise to cut taxes for small businesses has vanished into thin air.

Why is the government breaking its promise and hanging Canadian small business owners out to dry?

● (1420)

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are very proud of budget 2016 for many reasons, but one of the most important reasons is what it will do for our economy and how much it will help small and medium-sized businesses.

We are helping the Canadian middle class by improving their situation. That is going to improve every single consumer of small and medium-sized businesses in this country. We are going to grow the economy, and that is going to make business in Canada much more successful in the future.

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are spending \$30 billion of borrowed money, but not a dime of it is going to small businesses. It is not a question anymore of delaying their promise to cut taxes for small businesses; now they have admitted they do not even have a timeline for it.

Is the Prime Minister ignoring small businesses because he still thinks, as he did in the election, that they are actually just ways for wealthy Canadians to cheat on taxes?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the celebration of Vaisakhi on the Hill, let me take this opportunity to wish everyone a happy Vaisakhi.

I want Canadians to know that small business is implicit throughout the entire budget. When it comes to small business owners, they are middle-class Canadians. The tax cut will benefit not only customers and clients but small business owners themselves. We know very well that the wealthy one per cent are most likely not our small business owners.

Oral Questions

We are here to represent them, but what members opposite need to recognize is that in this country people have views and opinions. This government is listening and is working with the entrepreneurs and the people we represent. We know what small—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean.

* * *

[Translation]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are going to borrow \$30 billion we do not have to invest in what they claim to be infrastructure projects.

However, very little of this money will be invested in roads, public transit, or the promises they made during the election campaign. In their latest budget, the Liberals spend this money on other things, on expenses that will become recurring. Canadians are now realizing that they cannot trust this government.

How can the Prime Minister justify a \$30-billion deficit while claiming to invest in infrastructure, when that is not what he is spending it on? How does he explain that?

[English]

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are proud to invest \$120 billion over the next 10 years to build and rebuild the Canadian economy. Out of that \$120 billion, \$10 billion will be invested in the first two years in transit, in social infrastructure, in building roads and bridges and supporting communities throughout the country regardless of their size. This is the investment that will help us grow the economy, make our economy more productive, and build communities that are strong, sustainable, and inclusive for all Canadians to live in.

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is money we already had in our plan. The former government already had a plan for \$75 billion. The Liberals promised a lot, but they do not deliver. That will be delivered after 2019. They do not respect what they said in the campaign.

[Translation]

Furthermore, they are going to borrow \$100 billion over four years. How does this government plan on returning to a balanced budget?

[English]

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, none of the money the hon. member is talking about has been invested in the Canadian economy for the last two years. We will invest that money immediately, as well as \$10 billion more on top of the Building Canada fund.

We are committed to supporting municipalities in building the critical infrastructure that is necessary to grow the economy. We will do that with additional money and we will do it by expediting the money that should have been invested in 2014 and 2015.

[Translation]

ETHICS

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, although the Prime Minister promised a different kind of government, he has no problem with his Minister of Justice participating in a Liberal Party fundraiser at \$500 a plate. However, the ministers' guide, "Open and Accountable Government", is very clear: there should be no preferential access to government, or appearance of preferential access, in exchange for political contributions.

Can the Prime Minister tell us why he is not able to follow the rules that he, himself, set?

• (1425)

[English]

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, fundraising is an activity that every member of this House engages in. Thankfully, on a federal level there are strict rules in place that determine how fundraising activities occur. We do not take donations from corporations and we do not take donations from unions.

In advance, I proactively sought the opinion of the Ethics Commissioner, to whom there was no conflict.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, with that answer it seems that sunny ways are clouding over more and more.

It seems like only yesterday that the government released ethical guidelines that state:

There should be no preferential access to government...accorded to individuals or organizations because they have made financial contributions to politicians and political parties.

Even Conservative Bev Oda, in an ethically challenged government, was caught in the same type of scandal and gave back the contributions. Why will the Minister of Justice not do the same thing?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my friend opposite is obviously struggling with a very basic concept. The Liberal Party raises money in accordance with all the rules under the Canada Elections Act.

In this case my colleague, Minister of Justice, proactively reached out to the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner to discuss this particular event, and she indicated that it was appropriate.

That is the ethical standard that this government has raised from the previous government that was before us.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the clouds are looking darker and darker on the other side.

Oral Questions

[English]

The Panama papers gave us a glimpse into the troubling world of tax havens, and new reports raise questions about the Canada Revenue Agency's failure to act.

A senior CRA employee crossed the floor to work for KPMG while the company was under investigation for setting up a tax sham.

Why does the minister continue to defend the secret sweetheart deal for wealthy KPMG clients? How can Canadians take them seriously?

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians have a right to be outraged. Our government recognizes that international tax evasion and aggressive tax avoidance are critical issues. We are taking meaningful action. The government has allocated more than \$444 million to the CRA, to combat tax evasion and tax havens.

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, people are outraged about the Panama papers. Multinational companies and people with connections are taking advantage of laws that were made for them, in order to shirk their responsibilities. The minister announced new measures, but there is no word on her former executive who jumped ship to go work for KPMG, at the same time that the firm was being investigated by the CRA. What a joke. Why does the minister keep defending the secret agreement for cheats?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have long been post-employment restrictions at the Canada Revenue Agency for executives who leave the organization. In March 2014, the post-employment restrictions were extended to all employees who leave the Canada Revenue Agency. It would be inappropriate to comment on a specific case for reasons of privacy. Hon. members can rest assured that we are following this situation at the CRA very closely.

* * *

[English]

ETHICS

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on January 18, 2014, the member for Wascana wrote to the Ethics Commissioner, asking that she investigate the former member for Saint Boniface after she attended a political fundraiser. The member for Wascana stated in his letter that “[a]ny breach of the Conflict of Interest Code undermines the confidence that Canadians have in our elected representative”.

Given the nature of the justice minister's fundraiser this past week, how can the member complain on the one hand and then turn a blind eye to last week's Liberal fundraiser?

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I take my ethical responsibilities incredibly seriously. Fundraising, as I said, is an activity that every member of the House engages in. Another reality, in terms of fundraising, is to broadly engage with the public and have discussions. I would never place myself in a conflict of interest, and that is why I proactively engaged with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner prior to attending this event.

● (1430)

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again I rise in the House to question the justice minister on her lack of judgment. Last week, the justice minister and her ministerial policy adviser attended a pay-for-access fundraiser with Bay Street elite lawyers. While leaving the event, the minister stated she was attending the event as a regular MP, policy adviser in tow.

Does the justice minister really expect Canadians to believe that high-priced Ontario lawyers paid \$500 a plate to meet with the member of Parliament for Vancouver Granville?

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I attended this event as a member of Parliament, as all members of Parliament do. My policy adviser attended as a volunteer, paid her own way, and she lives in and has—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. I am having trouble hearing the member. It is going to be a short question period. Let us quiet down.

The hon. Minister of Justice has the floor.

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould: Mr. Speaker, to the member's question, I attended this fundraising event as all members of Parliament attend fundraising events. I was accompanied, on a voluntary basis, by my policy adviser. She paid her own way, having been a long-standing resident of the Toronto area. The subject matter of which I spoke in terms of the fundraising or what we talked about was Canadian politics, being involved in politics, and ensuring that everybody has the ability to have their voices heard, which is what I talked about.

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week, the minister attended a pay-to-play fundraiser in which attendees were invited to pay in return for access to the minister. The Minister of Justice has a duty not only to be independent but to be perceived as independent, which the minister has clearly compromised.

Will the minister do the right thing, stand up, apologize, and return the pay-to-play cash?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. The hon. government House leader.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the feigned indignation in front is a little rich.

We have indicated at all times that the Liberal Party raises money in accordance with the provisions of the Canada Elections Act. As I have said on previous occasions, nobody on this side of the House has gone to prison for illegal fundraising, and that is something they are having trouble saying over there.

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in attending this fundraising event, the minister broke the Prime Minister's code of open and accountable government and the minister crossed the line by putting herself in a conflict of interest.

Oral Questions

In order to clear the stench from this sordid Liberal fundraising affair, will the minister release the list of attendees? If not, what does the minister have to hide?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, we have nothing to hide.

The member knows full well that all of those donations are disclosed, according to law, every quarter. The member can spend the whole evening searching the Internet. Here is good news: it is coming to a computer near him.

While he is up asking questions, perhaps he should ask his colleague from Red Deer about fundraising activities when Senator Duffy went to his riding and, in fact, even threatened litigation with the riding association over that event.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, budget 2016 provides \$20 million to the First Nations Finance Authority, the same organization that the Minister of Justice chaired, the same organization that the Minister of Justice's husband lobbies for. There is a clear conflict of interest here.

The Prime Minister states that his ministers must uphold the highest ethical standards and the impartiality of government is to be maintained and enhanced.

Does \$20 million to an organization so intertwined with the Minister of Justice and her husband seem impartial?

• (1435)

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am extraordinarily proud of that investment to the First Nations Finance Authority.

Every member of the aboriginal affairs committee last year heard the testimony. This is an organization that takes a small amount of money, turns it into a large amount of money, and accesses infrastructure for first nations, coast to coast to coast.

This is an excellent investment. Ask any of the members on that side. The member needs to ask her colleagues on the aboriginal affairs committee why they supported that in the report.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week, the Minister of Justice said she went to Toronto to attend a fundraising activity simply as the member for Vancouver Granville. The minister would therefore have us believe that the people she met at this cocktail party in Toronto wanted to talk to her about matters that are important to her riding in Vancouver. Let us be real. If I go to Toronto, no one is going to talk to me about what is going on in Lévis—Lotbinière.

Will the minister stop taking us for fools and admit that she was there as the Minister of Justice?

[*English*]

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I did attend a fundraising event. In advance, I cleared it with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner and complied with all federal rules with respect to fundraising.

The purpose of the discussion, the primary discussion that occurred at that event, was about Canada. It was about how far we have come as a country wherein we embrace diversity, ensure that all voices are heard, and recognize that in a country such as Canada, the justice minister can be an aboriginal person and also be a woman. That is what this country is about.

* * *

[*Translation*]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let us go from Bay Street to Attawapiskat. The chief of Attawapiskat was once again forced to declare a state of emergency on Saturday, following a rash of suicide attempts by young people in his community.

While the Prime Minister talks about how saddened he is by the situation, the fact is that it is getting worse and nothing is being done about it.

The government refused to conduct an inquiry, and requests for mental health services are often denied. The government is turning its back on young people.

When will the government take action and put an end to this tragedy?

[*English*]

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question and for changing the topic in the House.

This is one of the most serious and pressing tragedies that our nation is facing. I am devastated by the situation that is taking place in Attawapiskat. I am working with my colleague the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs to respond to this tragedy.

I was in conversation yesterday with National Chief Bellegarde. I spoke today with Chief Shisheesh from Attawapiskat. We now have five new mental health workers in the community. We are responding to both the immediate needs and long-term needs of this community.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as parliamentarians, our primary responsibility is to make sure children in this country have hope, and we are failing them. I want to thank the minister for her positive words on Attawapiskat, but as the community said to me this morning, it should not take a state of emergency to get mental health workers to fly into a region that has had 700-plus suicide attempts.

There is no money in the budget for mental health services for indigenous children. I have this question for the minister. What is it going to take to end this cycle of crisis and death among young people? What are the concrete steps for the long term that the Liberals are going to put on the ground, not just in Attawapiskat but in all the indigenous communities of this country?

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member will find no argument with me that in fact we need to find a way to restore hope for these communities and particularly for the young people who consider taking their lives.

In fact, as the hon. member may know, the budget includes \$8.4 billion in funding for indigenous communities. It is these funds that would actually restore hope to communities. When we invest in education, so that these young people will have a standard of education that every Canadian child should have, it will renew hope. When we invest in these communities, so that people will have adequate housing and not be faced with overcrowding, we will find hope.

* * *

• (1440)

THE BUDGET

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government says that we are in a recession, but the evidence from Statistics Canada is that we are not. The government says it is going to be financially transparent, but the evidence from the parliamentary budget officer is that it is not.

The government says it is the saviour of the middle class, but the evidence from Finance Canada, which was just forced out of it by the parliamentary budget officer, is that the Liberals plan on slashing this help to the middle class by 75% by 2021.

Let us just cut to the chase here, since we know where this is going. Can the Minister of Finance tell us today which taxes he is actually going to raise on us?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be able to talk about taxes in our budget. We started on January 1 by reducing taxes on nine million Canadians. We moved forward with our Canada child benefit, which gives more money to nine out of 10 families with children—on average \$2,300 more.

We are in a situation where we are helping people who have not had the help they have needed over the last generation. We are improving the lot of middle-class Canadians, and we are going to grow the economy, so for the future their children and their grandchildren will be in a better position.

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister should know from his finance department that the median average wage for the Canadian middle class in the past 10 years rose 13% under the Conservative mandate.

The minister said that he consulted private-sector economists for predictions to the economy. He did not take their advice. The Liberals promised and advised many times that they would reduce the small business tax. They did not take small business tax advice either.

This is the question I have for the minister. Why is he even bothering to consult with small or big business owners in this country when he is not going to take their advice?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we were happy to consult with Canadians. We had more than 250,000 people who were touched by our pre-budget consultations. We listened to Canadians across the country, small businesses and big businesses.

We have made a real difference for small and medium-sized business by helping middle-class Canadians. We are investing in the future of Canada through a new innovation plan that is going to

allow us to grow our economy over the long term. This is what Canada needs at this time, and we are going to make a real difference for future Canadians.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government loves to go on and on about its lofty principles, but its actions say quite the opposite.

Consider the example of transparency. The government boasts about being transparent; meanwhile, it is eliminating transparency rules for first nations and labour unions. We are not the only ones saying so. The parliamentary budget officer said that he is, and I quote, “unable to provide completed tables due to the lack of information provided in Budget 2016.”

Why is the government hiding information from Canadians? Why this lack of transparency?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are very proud of budget 2016. We have been open and transparent with Canadians. We introduced measures that are easy to understand.

We also know that the PBO leads an important institution. We received a letter from him on April 1, and over the week that followed, we provided all necessary information to the PBO for his office to understand our budget.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister forgot some things, because in his budget he inflated the figures, to say the least.

With respect to job creation, it says in the budget that 146,000 new jobs will be preserved. The parliamentary budget officer said that is not the case. On the contrary, we are talking about a much smaller number, namely 86,000 jobs. Furthermore, the PBO concluded that the forecasts for the private sector are “excessive” and that this budget, as tabled, “makes parliamentarians’ work more difficult”.

Why did the government fudge the numbers? Why is the government refusing to tell Canadians the truth?

[English]

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are proud of what we have put in the budget. It is open. It is transparent. We are talking here about how much we will grow the economy. That is the debate. We are confident that our measures to help Canadians today, with tax cuts and benefit changes, and our measures for the future, with infrastructure expenditures and the new innovation plan, will make a real difference over the long term, allowing us to grow the economy. We are happy to have the debate on exactly how much it will grow the economy.

Oral Questions

●(1445)

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what on earth will it take for the Liberals to stop backing the TPP? Nobel Prize-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz calls it the “worst” trade deal ever. He warns it will erode workers' rights, kill Canadian jobs, and reverse the principle of polluter pays, making governments pay billions for any attempt to protect the environment. Can the minister confirm that Stiglitz explained to her the serious problems with the TPP, and will she tell the House which part she did not understand?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the NDP condemned the TPP without even reading it. That is not how we are doing it. We promised during the campaign to consult, and that is what we are doing. Joe Stiglitz is a friend of mine, as he said in his interviews, and I talk to him often. I spoke to him last week about the TPP.

However, I would like to urge the hon. member to talk to her own NDP colleagues; for example, Jen Anthony, an NDP delegate at the convention on Sunday, who said, “cattle producers are significant benefactors of this deal. It allows for a better open market—”

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, more and more people are opposing the trans-Pacific partnership.

Last week, Joseph Stiglitz, winner of the Nobel prize in economics, sounded the alarm for workers. Not only are the Liberals determined to move forward with the agreement, but they are also casting doubt on compensation for the dairy industry. There was not one penny in the last budget for this.

When will the Liberals listen to the concerns of workers and stand up for Canadian workers here in Canada and for our dairy producers?

[*English*]

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my hon. colleague's question and concern. I think my hon. colleague is fully aware that, as a government, we support supply management, and this government fully understands the importance of compensation to the supply management sector.

* * *

[*Translation*]**SMALL BUSINESS**

Ms. Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the online activity of Canadian companies has reportedly more than doubled in six years and it generated an estimated \$136 billion in 2013. That represents 7% of the gross domestic product and this figure continues to grow.

Given the enormous potential that e-commerce represents for small, medium, and large businesses, what government measures

and initiatives are in place to support innovation and to help our Canadian companies enter the market?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her question and for the work she does with small businesses.

[*English*]

E-commerce is increasing at an amazing rate. It represents a huge opportunity for Canadian entrepreneurs. One of my constituents in Waterloo runs her own business making custom jewellery. Do members know where her best customers are? They are in California and Florida. Why is that? It is because with e-commerce the entire world is the marketplace. That is why our government has committed \$500 million to expand and improve broadband services in rural and remote areas, because Canadians' entrepreneurial spirit should not be limited by where they live.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, shrimp season has just opened in Newfoundland. Today we have heard that the Quinlan Brothers processing plant, which employs about 700 people, has suffered a devastating fire. This disaster will impact not only the community and local plant workers but also the fishermen who land their catch at Bay de Verde. Are the Liberals going to immediately move to give special EI access to these affected workers?

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, obviously, we are devastated by the news that there has been this horrible fire in Newfoundland, and we continue to monitor the situation.

There are workers who will be out of work. We are hoping that we are able to assist them in finding other opportunities in the region.

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is obvious from the budget that the Prime Minister did not teach geography. He has no idea where the oil and gas industry in Saskatchewan is actually located. EI benefits will only be extended in Saskatoon and northern Saskatchewan, which is nowhere near the oil patch in the southeast. The Prime Minister then insulted us by telling us that we should be thankful they have not been hit harder.

Why are these Liberals discriminating against Canadians who have lost their jobs in the energy sector in southeast Saskatchewan?

●(1450)

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the overall situation for the oil and gas sector, and more broadly the resource sector, has been very tough. In fact, certain areas of Canada have seen enormous and rapid increased unemployment. A target of 2% very rapidly and sustained was identified. When we used that screen on every region of Canada, 12 regions met that target.

Oral Questions

We continue to monitor the situation across Canada, and are very proud to be rolling out 2.5 billion dollars' worth of benefits to help those regions and every other Canadian.

Mr. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the people of southern Saskatchewan are more than just a cold-hearted formula.

The minister's budget speech was full of flowery imagery, where the sun shines, the wind blows, and the unicorns roam happy and free, but the touchy-feely words and Care Bear stares will not create jobs. Instead, the Liberals are making the employment problem worse by blocking private sector solutions, like northern gateway and energy east. The Liberals are only treating the symptoms with their EI changes, and they cannot even do that fairly.

Will the minister show some compassion and abandon this cold-hearted formula that punishes southern Saskatchewan?

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are proud that there are a number of economists who have identified the fact that we are identifying a 2% increase in unemployment in a sustained and sharp way actually identifies the areas that need direct attention.

We are monitoring the situation from coast to coast to coast, and will continue to do so as the situation progresses.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister flippantly said that Albertans should be pleased that they have not been hit harder. More than 100,000 energy workers have lost their jobs. Alberta's unemployment is almost unprecedented. In fact, it was only higher when his dad was PM.

Energy drives Bruderheim's economy. People are not pleased. They cannot even get the Liberals to extend EI benefits now when they need it most, but they really just want jobs. They have contributed so much to all of Canada. Why is the government ignoring these hard-hit Albertans?

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is hardly the situation. In fact, every Canadian is improved by the changes that we have made to EI. It has helped every region in this country, including those who were specifically hit by the oil and gas price reduction. In fact, those companies that are servicing the oil and gas sector will be benefiting by doubling the amount of work-share weeks, increasing the opportunities for small business and workers in regions that were impacted.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government is leaving western Canadians who are unemployed behind. Instead of helping everyone, the Liberals are picking winners and losers.

Last week, Statistics Canada pointed out that unemployment in Edmonton increased 34% over the last year. In southern Saskatchewan, it has gone up by 40% in the last year. However, according to the Prime Minister, unemployed Canadians living in Edmonton and southern Saskatchewan should be "pleased" that they are not getting help from the government.

Will the Liberals reverse this discriminatory policy and extend EI benefits to all workers, including those in the west who need it?

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we were very pleased to roll out an EI platform, the first phase of which is rolling out to Canadian workers benefits that amount to \$2.5 billion. Where the additional help was provided was to those people who need it the most.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals want to create a two-tiered employment insurance system that excludes Quebec. They are abandoning the Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean region, which lost 7,000 jobs in the past year. They are abandoning struggling seasonal workers in the Gaspé. They are abandoning Montreal, the unemployment capital of Canada. To top it all off, the Liberals want to make it legal to lay off 2,600 Air Canada workers, workers they supported before they took office. That is what we call betrayal. Are the Liberals not ashamed of themselves?

Why did the minister flip-flop and why is he now turning his back on these 2,600 families?

• (1455)

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as you know, now that the dispute between the governments of Quebec and Manitoba and Air Canada is over, we can clarify the Air Canada Public Participation Act. I would also like to add that Air Canada has promised to create two centres of excellence, one in Quebec and the other in Manitoba.

That being said, since the issue will be going before the courts, it would not be appropriate for me to say anything more.

* * *

[*English*]

CONSULAR AFFAIRS

Hon. Tony Clement (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I understand a Canadian delegation met in recent days with the Reverend Hyeon Soo Lim, who remains in prison, forced to a life sentence of hard labour in North Korea. That is just outrageous. Reports indicate that his condition is deteriorating and that time is growing short for him.

My question is simple. What are the Liberals doing to bring Reverend Lim home to his family and to his congregation?

Mr. Omar Alghabra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Consular Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, like Mr. Lim's family and friends, the Government of Canada is concerned about his rights and his well-being. We continue to work for his release.

I have met in the past with members of his family and members of the community. We continue to be engaged on this file. Our officials are providing consular services to him and his family, and we will not stop until Mr. Lim is released.

*Oral Questions***NATIONAL DEFENCE**

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week, General Jonathan Vance said the battle against ISIS has no end in sight. He went on to say Canadians should prepare for more Canadian Armed Forces casualties with the expansion of the mission on the ground in Iraq.

Our troops are facing increased risk, and because of the Liberals, they do not have Canadian air support. Will the Minister of National Defence admit that prematurely pulling out our CF-18s was a mistake?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his concern for the well-being of our troops. I can assure the member that our troops in Iraq have full air support when needed. In fact, we have done a thorough assessment.

I talk to the chief of the defence staff on a regular basis about the security situation, and we have taken all the measures necessary and have given freedom of actions to take any future necessary precautions for the protection of our troops.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals refuse to say that we are at war with ISIS, but according to the chief of the defence staff, the risk to the lives of our troops on the ground in Iraq has gone up. How can Canadian casualties increase if we are not at war?

Will the defence minister join our allies and finally say that Canada is at war against the jihadi genocidal death cult called ISIS?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member can keep talking in terms of the definitions of war, but our fight against ISIL does not change in any way. We will take every action with our coalition partners to defeat Daesh, and we are not going to give ISIL legitimacy by calling them a state, by calling this a war.

* * *

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mrs. Alaina Lockhart (Fundy Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, rural areas across the country, like my riding of Fundy Royal, often rely on traditional industry such as forestry, fisheries, and agriculture to power the economy. In today's global economy it is vital that these traditional industries become more efficient and develop new markets in order to grow.

Could the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development inform the House of initiatives being undertaken to help traditional industries prepare for the future?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Fundy Royal for her question and her relentless work in supporting this region. I would also like to thank the member for her great work with the provincial government in announcing new investments in Sussex community.

This \$350,000 investment will support three great New Brunswick companies. These investments through ACOA will help businesses expand, hire more people, and purchase equipment. It

is not simply about growing these great companies, it is about growing this great region.

* * *

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Burma's Rohingya Muslims are heavily persecuted, but the minister was just in Burma and did not even mention the Rohingyas. When the government killed the office of religious freedom, it said it was just about doing the same work a different way. Well, so much for that, because the office is gone. The projects have stopped, including projects in Burma. No replacement has even been announced, and there is no money in the budget for international human rights.

Are all these changes coincidental, or is turning away from human rights the price to buy votes from dictators at the UN?

• (1500)

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the promotion and protection of human rights, including freedom of religion, belief and conscience, is an integral part of Canada's constructive engagement in the world. Global Affairs is continuing this important work and its professionals are working hard on a transition to a comprehensive vision on human rights, including religious freedom of course. Dr. Bennett and our staff are working together. As a multicultural and multi-faith society, Canada is well positioned to champion peaceful pluralism, respect for diversity, and all human rights.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Ontario Power Generation wants to dump abandoned radioactive nuclear waste next to the Great Lakes. It cannot say that this waste will not leak, nor has it considered any other options. Burying nuclear waste has a 100% failure rate. The last set of nuclear waste that was buried actually caught on fire.

This madness has to stop and at the risk of the health and safety of future generations, including my daughter and many other youth who are visiting Ottawa today, we need to say no.

This is on the minister's desk right now. Will the minister stop the plan to dump nuclear waste down a hole, walk away and leave it for future generations?

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the minister is restoring the confidence in environmental assessments in ensuring that decisions are based on the best available scientific evidence. As the hon. member knows, this is under active consideration. The minister had asked for an extension to consider alternative sites. We are going through that process, but everyone can rest assured the decision will be based on science and data. We will make those decisions in a responsible and sound environmental manner.

*Oral Questions***STATUS OF WOMEN**

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last month we celebrated International Women's Day. Although that important day has passed, we must remain vigilant and remember that women and children across Canada are disproportionately affected by domestic violence.

Could the hon. Minister of Status of Women please advise the House of the steps her department is taking to ensure that women and their children fleeing intimate partner violence are able to find shelters and other services to help them rebuild their lives?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Status of Women, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, ensuring women and their children are free from violence is a priority for this government, and that is why I am working with my colleagues and experts across the country to develop a federal gender-based violence strategy. Shelters are also key to supporting this goal, which is why we announced in our budget that we will create over 3,000 shelter spaces over the next two years ensuring that more women have a safe place to turn in violent situations. By enabling women and girls to live violence-free, we can move closer to gender equality.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are hearing from band members across this country who want to know that the Prime Minister's \$8.4 billion in the budget is going to have a real meaningful impact on their lives. We are also hearing that they are very concerned about the gutting of the First Nations Financial Transparency Act. When the Liberals refuse to allow first nations to access spending information on reserves, it does impact their lives. Why will the Liberals not allow first nations community members to have the same access to information of all Canadians?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member well knows that members of first nations communities do have access to all the audited statements. If they do not have access, they can get that straight from my office, and those requests are very, very rare. That was the reason we opposed the act, because first nations had not been consulted. We all want accountability. We just cannot do it top-down.

* * *

[Translation]

TAXATION

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, seasonal workers are on the verge of falling into the infamous black hole, a period of no employment insurance benefits. However, there is nothing for these workers in the budget.

We have sick people waiting in hospital hallways and students going into debt to learn, but this budget abandons them as well, since it does not contain any transfer increases. The same goes for leading-edge businesses in Quebec: the budget offers nothing for them. In spite of all these omissions, the government is predicting a \$29-billion deficit.

Does the government realize that all Canadians, and especially those who need help, are paying for its lax attitude towards tax havens?

● (1505)

[English]

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, budget 2016 was an historic budget. It helps people across this country.

It certainly helps people in Quebec, like it helps people across this country, with changes in their taxes, with changes in the way we give the Canada child benefit. It will make a real difference for people in that province, as it will across the country, through investments in infrastructure and in the long-term growth of our economy.

We are confident that people in Quebec and across the country will have a better future as a result of these investments.

[Translation]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of National Revenue just announced that 100 investigators would be hired to identify tax fraud. That is all well and good, but the problem is that it is essentially legal to use tax havens, since Liberal and Conservative governments drafted the tax rules specifically to allow profiteers to repatriate their profits without paying anything here.

Instead of announcing symbolic measures, will this government commit to seriously crack down on tax havens by abolishing the regulatory framework that helps them, yes or no?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I made an unprecedented announcement about combatting tax evasion and international tax avoidance.

The vast majority of middle-class Canadians pay their fair share of taxes, but some wealthy Canadians are hiding their money in foreign tax havens to avoid paying taxes. That is not fair and it must change.

Thanks to our historic \$444 million investment, wealthy Canadians will be required to pay their share of taxes.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Simon Marcil (Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, last week, the UPA and the Government of Quebec both called on the federal government to regulate imports of diafiltered milk. This morning, a central-Quebec-based group of agri-food advocates known as the Front commun de la filière agroalimentaire weighed in.

On page 127 of the budget, the government talks about eliminating tariffs on food manufacturing ingredients other than supply-managed products.

Does the government really want to eliminate tariffs on diafiltered milk, which is contrary to the wishes of Quebec, the UPA and the Front commun?

Routine Proceedings

[English]

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are very aware of issues with enforcement of our rules surrounding supply management.

As my colleague, the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, has already said, we support supply management and we do so with our trade policy.

We are reviewing these rules right now and working very hard on it.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Mr. Speaker, I would like to seek the unanimous consent of the House to table the following documents, in both official languages. They deal with ministerial conduct, and I would be happy to read it out. It states, "Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries must act with honesty and must uphold the highest ethical standards".

Some hon. members: No.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: It goes on and says that—

The Speaker: I think the hon. member has heard that there is no unanimous consent. I know he would like to read for a while, but there is no unanimous consent.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

● (1510)

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to section 7 of the Special Economic Measures Act, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, copies of the following regulations made on March 18, 2016 under the Special Economic Measures Act: regulations amending the Special Economic Measures (Russia) Regulations, and regulations amending the Special Economic Measures (Ukraine) Regulations.

* * *

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 48 petitions.

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WAYS AND MEANS

MOTION NO. 2

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been consultations among the parties and if you seek it, you should find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, Ways and Means motion No. 2 be disposed of as follows:

(a) On April 12, 2016, if a subamendment is under consideration at 1:59 p.m. or when no Member rises to speak, whichever is earlier, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings, the question to dispose of the subamendment be deemed put and a recorded division be deemed requested and deferred until the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions the same day;

(b) On April 12, 2016, if an amendment is under consideration at the expiry of the time provided for Government Orders, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings, the question to dispose of the amendment be deemed put and a recorded division be deemed requested and deferred until April 13, 2016, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions; and

(c) On April 14, 2016, at the expiry of the time provided for Government Orders, unless the debate be previously concluded, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings, the question be deemed put on the main motion, a recorded division be deemed requested and deferred until April 19, 2016, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

PETITIONS**ANIMAL WELFARE**

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present an online petition calling on the federal government to ban the sale and use of electric shock collars on household pets. It was signed by over 5,400 Canadians and initiated by two constituents from my riding, Gwendy and Alfie Williams, who have worked tirelessly to protect animal welfare for the better part of the decade.

Members will notice that there is only one sheet of paper because this is the very first e-petition to be tabled in the House. I would like to thank all of the staff at the Clerk's office who have done an outstanding job in setting up Parliament's e-petition website.

The new system has been a resounding success to date, with over 50 official e-petitions, receiving nearly 150,000 signatures from the public. As more and more Canadians engage with this new form of participatory democracy, I urge the government to take their concerns seriously.

● (1515)

The Speaker: I want to add my thanks to the Clerk and the assistant clerks for their work on electronic petitions.

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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, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 57 and 65.

Routine Proceedings

[Text]

Question No. 57—**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:**

With regard to Canada Pension Plan Disability applications, and employing the same calculation method used by the Auditor General in his 2015 Fall Report (Exhibit 6.6), what is the backlog of appeals for Canada Pension Plan Disability decisions as of November 1, 2015?

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since its creation on April 1, 2013, the tribunal has received a total of 17,190 Canada pension plan disability appeals.

As of November 1, 2015, the number of active Canada pension plan disability appeals has been reduced to 5,969. Of those 5,969 appeals, there are only 332 appeals that are left from the backlog of over 6,000 cases initially transferred from the office of the commissioner of review tribunals.

As of February 23, 2016, the number of Canada pension plan disability appeals is now down to 4,906. Of those 4,906 appeals, only 85 appeals remain from the original backlog transferred by the office of the commissioner of review tribunals, and about 1,700 cases are currently assigned to members and will be decided in the near future.

In the fall of 2015, the tribunal established the following service standard for all new Canada pension plan and old age security appeals received at the general division as of December 1, 2015: 85% of final decisions will be made within five months of the appeal being ready to proceed.

Question No. 65—**Mrs. Cathy McLeod:**

With regard to the government's commitment to implement each one of the 94 recommendations prepared by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission: what are the government's projected costs to implement each recommendation, broken down by recommendation?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, insofar as Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, INAC, is concerned, the response is as follows.

On December 15, 2015, the Prime Minister accepted the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and announced that the government will work with leaders of first nations, Métis Nation, Inuit, provinces and territories, parties to the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, and other key partners, to design a national engagement strategy for developing and implementing a national reconciliation framework, informed by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action.

The 94 calls to action are directed to a wide range of institutions, including the Government of Canada, provincial and territorial governments, churches, corporations, and schools.

The costs of implementing the calls to action will only be known after national engagement with stakeholders has taken place and subsequent discussions have occurred with those responsible for the implementation of individual calls to action. For instance, the government is in the process of reviewing the submissions of families, loved ones, survivors, as well as front-line services, national aboriginal organizations, and provinces and territories in

order to design a national inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women and girls.

We will keep Canadians apprised of our progress on this commitment, including any related costs.

* * *

[English]

STARRED QUESTIONS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, would you be so kind as to call Starred Question No. 63? I ask that the question and answer to Question No. 63 be printed in *Hansard* as if read.

[Text]

*Question No. 63—**Mr. Kennedy Stewart:**

With regard to the reported unemployment rate of 7.2%, provided by Statistics Canada in January 2016: what is the government's target for reducing the unemployment rate in Canada?

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in January 2016, Statistics Canada reported that the national unemployment rate was 7.2%, which is a 0.6 percentage point increase since January 2015, when it was 6.6%. Throughout 2015, the unemployment rate fluctuated between 6.6% and 7.1%. However, the national unemployment rate remains below its historical average of 8.3% since January 1976, which was Statistics Canada's first labour force survey publication.

The fragile and uncertain global economic environment has weighed on Canada's own economy. Over the last four years, growth in Canada has slowed to below 2% on average, and the sharp decline in global crude oil prices since the end of 2014 has placed more significant downward pressure on the economy. However, the conditions are in place for the economy to begin to regain momentum, and post more solid economic growth and job creation going forward.

The government recognizes that investing in infrastructure creates good, well-paying jobs that can help the middle class grow and prosper today. And by making it easier to move people and products, well-planned infrastructure can deliver sustained economic growth for years to come. With historic investments in public transit, green infrastructure, and social infrastructure, budget 2016 will take advantage of historically low interest rates to renew Canada's infrastructure and improve the quality of life for all Canadians.

In addition, to better make sure that Canadians get the help they need when they need it, the Government is taking immediate action to improve employment insurance. This includes making changes to the eligibility rules for new entrants and re-entrants, temporarily enhancing benefits in certain regions, reducing the employment insurance waiting period, extending the maximum duration of the work-sharing agreements, and investing in improved service delivery.

Routine Proceedings

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, if Questions Nos. 50 to 56, 58 to 62, and 66 to 69 could be made orders for returns, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 50—Ms. Dianne L. Watts:

With regard to the Provincial Territorial Infrastructure Component, National and Regional Projects of the New Building Canada Plan, and how much money has been earmarked for projects of interest which have been planned but not yet been announced: (a) what funds have been allocated to each province and territory; (b) what is the number of projects in each province and territory; (c) how much money has been earmarked for each project listed in (b); (d) what data was used to determine which projects would be selected; and (e) when will these projects be announced?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 51—Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:

With regard to ministerial offices outside the National Capital Region: (a) how many offices were opened under the previous government; (b) how many offices have been kept open by the current government; (c) what branches or programs are operated out of these offices; (d) what is the name and purpose of each office, broken down by region and province; (e) what is the address and location of each office; (f) what are the projected annual operating expenses for each office for the coming year; and (g) what is the number of (i) full-time staff, (ii) temporary staff, in each office?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 52—Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:

With respect to data, information, or privacy breaches in government departments, institutions and agencies for 2015: (a) how many breaches have occurred in total, broken down by (i) department, institution, or agency, (ii) number of individuals affected; (b) of those breaches identified in (a), how many have been reported to the Office of the Privacy Commissioner, broken down by (i) department, institution or agency, (ii) number of individuals affected; and (c) how many breaches are known to have led to criminal activity such as fraud or identity theft, broken down by department, institution or agency?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 53—Mr. François Choquette:

With regard to the Translation Bureau (TB), which falls under the responsibility of Public Works and Government Services Canada: (a) since 2013-2014, broken down by year, (i) how many translator, interpreter, terminologist and reviser positions has the TB had, (ii) how many client institutions has the TB had; (b) what is the total amount billed to the TB's client institutions for (i) translation or revision services, (ii) interpretation services; (c) what are the estimated costs of implementing a machine translation tool as of April 1, 2016; (d) what studies were undertaken on (i) the justification for implementing a machine translation tool, (ii) the impact of a machine translation tool on bilingualism in the public service, (iii) the quality of the texts translated by a machine translation tool, (iv) the costs associated with implementing a machine translation tool; (e) since 2005-2006, broken down by year and by department, what has been the total value of the contracts sent to external suppliers rather than the TB, broken down by contracts for (i) translation, (ii) interpretation, (iii) revision; (f) what financial and human resources, in terms of staff working in full-time equivalent (FTE) positions, has the TB devoted to developing its machine translation tool; (g) since 2011-2012, broken down by year and by department, what financial and human resources, in terms of FTEs, have been devoted to external suppliers and allocated to (i) contracting with suppliers for translation and revision, (ii) management of the contracts referred to in (i), (iii) quality assurance for these contracts; (h) since 2005-2006, broken down by year and by department, how many words have been translated by external suppliers rather than the TB; (i) since 2005-

2006, broken down by year, how much has the TB paid suppliers of translation services with which it has contracted; (j) since 2005-2006, broken down by year, what financial and human resources, in terms of FTEs, has the TB devoted to (i) contracting with suppliers for translation, (ii) management of these contracts, (iii) quality assurance for these contracts; (k) since 2013-2014, broken down by month, how many words have been sent to the TB by client institutions and (i) translated by translators who are indeterminate employees of the TB, (ii) translated by TB suppliers; (l) has the government taken steps to hire new employees between now and 2019-2020, and if so, how many translators will be hired internally, broken down by year, (i) in indeterminate positions, (ii) in temporary positions; and (m) what is the TB's current pricing structure?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 54—Mr. François Choquette:

With regard to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) and francophone immigration to Canada: (a) how many full time equivalents (FTEs) are allocated to IRCC to (i) process applications, (ii) develop programs for francophones outside Quebec; (b) how does IRCC take into account the specific needs and realities of francophone communities and of francophone immigrants outside Quebec in order to meet the objective of recruiting and integrating francophone immigrants into minority communities; (c) what are the IRCC's budgetary resources allocated by year, in the past five years, to (i) promotion and recruitment efforts in francophone countries abroad, (ii) settlement and resettlement services in Canada for francophones in francophone communities outside Quebec; (d) how does IRCC ensure that the resources allocated in (c) contribute to an approach by and for francophone minority communities; (e) what are the results of the francophone promotion and recruitment efforts in francophone countries abroad since 2013; (f) how many francophone immigrants has each of Canada's provinces and territories taken in per year in the past five years; (g) what is the proportion of francophone immigrants taken in for each of the last five years compared to all immigrants taken in during the same period; (h) in which IRCC immigration categories or programs have francophone immigrants been placed in each of the last five years, broken down by program; (i) what is IRCC's definition of a francophone immigrant; (j) how many francophone immigrants has Express Entry attracted per year since its creation, broken down by province and territory; (k) have any changes been made to Express Entry since its creation to attract more francophone immigrants and, if so, what are they; (l) are there any formal mechanisms for consulting francophone minority communities and, if so, what are they; and (m) to date, how many members of the Immigration and Refugee Board, broken down by city, (i) have French as their preferred language, (ii) are proficient in both official languages (level B2 or higher)?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 55—Ms. Irene Mathysen:**

With regard to Veterans Affairs Canada, for the fiscal years 2014-2015 and 2015-2016: (a) what was the number of applicants for each of the following programs, (i) Disability and Death Compensation—Disability Pension Program—Disability Pensions, (ii) Disability and Death Compensation, (iii) Disability and Death Compensation—Disability Pension Program, (iv) Disability and Death Compensation—Disability Pension Program—Exceptional Incapacity Allowance, (v) Disability and Death Compensation—Disability Pension Program—Treatment Allowance, (vi) Disability Awards Program, (vii) Disability Awards Program—Disability Awards, (viii) Financial Support Program, (ix) Financial Support Program—Financial Benefits, (x) Financial Support Program—Financial Benefits—Earnings Loss, (xi) Financial Support Program—Financial Benefits—Canadian Forces Income Support, (xii) Financial Support Program—Financial Benefits—Supplementary Retirement Benefit, (xiii) Financial Support Program—Financial Benefits—Permanent Impairment Allowance, (xiv) Financial Support Program—War Veterans Allowance, (xv) Health Care Program and Reestablishment Services, (xvi) Health Care Program and Reestablishment Services—Rehabilitation, (xvii) Health Care Program and Reestablishment Services—Career Transition Services, (xviii) Health Care Program and Reestablishment Services—Health Care Benefits, (xix) Health Care Program and Reestablishment Services—Health Care Benefits—Health Care Benefits and Services, (xx) Health Care Program and Reestablishment Services—Health Care Benefits—Veterans Independence Program—Other Services, (xxi) Health Care Program and Reestablishment Services—Intermediate and Long-Term Care, (xxii) Health Care Program and Reestablishment Services—Intermediate and Long-Term Care—Non-Departmental Institutions—Veterans Independence Program, (xxiii) Health Care Program and Reestablishment Services—Intermediate and Long-Term Care—Non-Departmental Institutions—Long Term Care, (xxiv) Canada Remembers Program—Partnerships and Collaborations, (xxv) Health Care Program and Reestablishment Services—Intermediate and Long-Term Care—Funeral and Burial Program; (b) what was the number of rejected applications for the programs identified in (a); (c) what was the number of completed applications for the programs identified in (a); (d) what was the average length of time for applications to be processed for the programs identified in (a); (e) what was the median length of time for application to be processed for the programs identified in (a); (f) what was the shortest length of time for an application to be processed for the programs identified in (a); and (g) what was the longest length of time for an application to be processed for the programs identified in (a)?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 56—Ms. Irene Mathysen:

With regard to the Veterans Review and Appeal Board, for fiscal years 2014-2015 and 2015-2016: (a) what was the number of applications received; (b) what was the number of applications not granted a hearing; (c) what was the number of successful appeals; (d) what was the average length of time between submission of application and appeal; (e) what was the median length of time between submission of application and appeal; (f) what was the shortest length of time between submission of application and appeal; and (g) what was the longest length of time between submission of application and appeal?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 58—Mr. Dan Albas:

With respect to border security and the sharing of information with foreign countries: (a) do Canada and Mexico have a coordinated entry-exit information system such as it exists between Canada and the United States; and (b) is any information about Canadians who stay in Mexico for extended periods of time sent, whether through an entry-exit information system or by any other means, to the (i) Canada Revenue Agency, (ii) Mexican tax authorities?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 59—Mr. Dan Albas:

With regard to agreements on internal trade: (a) what is the number of meetings that ministers, Members of Parliament acting on behalf of the government, or federal public officials have had since November 4, 2015, with provincial counterparts regarding the implementation of a new or updated agreement on internal trade; (b) what were the dates of these meetings; (c) who were the participants of these meetings; (d) how many such meetings did ministers, Members of Parliament acting on behalf of the government, or federal public officials have between February 6, 2006, and November 3, 2015; (e) how many studies has the government undertaken

since November 4, 2015, regarding (i) the detrimental effects of interprovincial trade barriers, (ii) the positive impacts of a new or updated agreement on internal trade; (f) what were the findings of the studies identified in (e), including but not limited to specific statistical analysis on (i) how much the Canadian economy is being hindered because of a lack of a new or updated agreement on internal trade, (ii) how much the Canadian economy could grow with a new or updated agreement on internal trade; (g) since November 4, 2015, has the government performed any studies on determining which of the two options for moving forward on interprovincial trade, as articulated in the proposal “One Canada, One National Economy: Modernizing Internal Trade in Canada,” would be preferred, and, if so, what were the findings of any such studies, including but not limited to, specific statistical findings on how one option was better than the other; and (h) how much has the government spent since November 4, 2015, on policy analysis or consultations regarding the implementation of a new or updated agreement on internal trade?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 60—Mr. Alexander Nuttall:

With regard to the Prime Minister’s attendance of a rally held on February 9, 2016, in support of the provincial Liberal candidate in the Whitby—Oshawa byelection: what was the total cost for the Prime Minister’s travel, security, and staffing, in relation to this event?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 61—Mr. Fin Donnelly:

With regard to the spread of the Infectious Salmon Anemia (ISA) virus and the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard: (a) is the Minister aware that, despite public statements by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency that they had been unable to reproduce the ISA virus test results produced by the Kibenge laboratory at University of Prince Edward Island on British Columbia farmed and wild salmon, the only retesting that was done did produce similar results; (b) is the Minister aware of any government actions to delay, obstruct, or discredit research related to the growing body of scientific evidence regarding the presence and impacts of the ISA virus and other aquaculture-related viruses, in Canada; (c) what measures will the Minister take to respond to the threat posed by this virus following the recommendations of the Cohen Commission of Inquiry into the Decline of Sockeye Salmon in the Fraser River; and (d) will the measures in (c) include (i) ending the delays in authorizing the full implementation of the Strategic Salmon Health Initiative, (ii) removing impediments to the development of a new screening test for the ISA virus at the Kibenge laboratory in the Atlantic Veterinary College, (iii) authorizing a scientifically rigorous, publicly credible program with active involvement of First Nations and non-governmental scientists to sample farmed and wild fish for use in studying the presence and impacts of the ISA and other aquaculture-related viruses?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 62—Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet:

With regard to the amounts allocated to the Homelessness Partnering Strategy: (a) what amounts have not been spent to date for the various regions of Quebec for fiscal years 2014-2015 and 2015-2016; and (b) are there unspent amounts for the other provinces and territories for fiscal years 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 and, if so, what are these amounts, broken down by province and territory?

(Return tabled)

Routine Proceedings

Question No. 66—Mr. Bob Saroya:

With respect to the government's commitment to lift the visa requirement for Mexican nationals entering Canada: (a) has the department of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship conducted a formal visa review, including a technical visit to the country, to provide a holistic, evidence-based assessment of Mexico's eligibility for a visa exemption under Canada's objective visa policy framework; (b) if a formal visa review for Mexico has been conducted by technical experts in the public service, (i) over what period of time was the review conducted, (ii) what are the conclusions and recommendations with respect to Mexico's overall eligibility for a visa exemption under Canada's visa policy framework; (c) if a formal visa review for Mexico has not been conducted, why has a decision been taken to grant a visa exemption in the absence of evidence for each indicator used to assess risk to Canada and Canadians; (d) under Canada's existing visa policy framework, what are the indicators that are used to determine a country's eligibility for a visa exemption, broken down by (i) quantitative indicators, (ii) qualitative indicators; (e) for each quantitative and qualitative indicator identified in (d), (i) which indicators does Mexico currently meet, (ii) which indicators does Mexico currently not meet; (f) for each socio-economic factor that is typically assessed in a formal visa review, (i) what is Canada's current assessment of the factor in Mexico, (ii) does the evidence demonstrate a "push" factor that could incentivize irregular migration to Canada, if Mexican nationals are exempt from the visa requirement, (iii) does Mexico currently meet Canada's requirement, under the existing visa policy framework, for each particular indicator, to be eligible for a visa exemption; (g) with respect to migration patterns and trends, for each factor that is typically assessed under Canada's visa policy framework, (i) what is Canada's assessment of the current condition in Mexico, (ii) does the evidence demonstrate eligibility for a visa exemption; (h) does Canada's assessment of Mexico's travel document integrity indicate an acceptable level of risk for a visa exemption or an unacceptable level of risk; (i) have Canadian technical experts in the public service found that the Mexican passport is a reliable indicator of identity and nationality; (j) have Canadian technical experts in the public service found that Mexico's border management practices indicate an acceptable level of risk for a visa exemption or an unacceptable level of risk; (k) have Canadian technical experts in the public service found third country nationals are using Mexico as a transit point to travel illegally to Canada; (l) have Canadian technical experts in the public service found there are weaknesses in screening and enforcement measures at Mexican Ports of Entry; (m) does Canada's assessment of security matters in Mexico indicate an acceptable level of risk for a visa exemption or an unacceptable level of risk; (n) have Canadian technical experts in the public service found there is evidence of corruption or links to organized crime in the ranks of Mexican border officials and law enforcement; (o) have Canadian technical experts found that there is evidence of human smuggling activities and networks operating inside and through Mexico; (p) does Canada's assessment of human rights matters in Mexico indicate an acceptable level of risk for a visa exemption or an unacceptable level of risk; (q) with respect to visa refusal rates for Mexican nationals, (i) what is the quantitative threshold, expressed as a numerical percentage, used under Canada's visa policy framework to indicate an acceptable level of risk, (ii) what is the current visa refusal rate, using the most recent calendar year, (iii) does the current visa refusal rate indicate an acceptable level of risk or an unacceptable level of risk, in the context of granting a visa exemption; (r) with respect to asylum rates for Mexican nationals, (i) what is the threshold used under Canada's visa policy framework to indicate an acceptable level of risk, (ii) what was the asylum rate for the last calendar year before a visa requirement was imposed, (iii) what was the asylum rate for Mexican nationals for each calendar year, from 2010 to 2015, after the visa requirement was imposed; (s) with respect to asylum claims made in Canada by Mexican nationals in the calendar year prior to the imposition of a visa requirement, (i) how many people were granted refugee status by the Immigration and Refugee Board, (ii) how many people were refused refugee status by the Immigration and Refugee Board, (iii) how many asylum claims were withdrawn, (iv) how many asylum claimants were inadmissible, (v) what was the cost of processing the total number of asylum claims made by Mexican nationals in the calendar year prior to the imposition of a visa requirement, broken down by outcome at the Immigration and Refugee Board, (vi) on average, how long did it take to remove failed Mexican asylum claimants from Canada; (t) with respect to the Immigration Violation Rate, (i) what is the threshold used under Canada's visa policy framework to determine an acceptable level of risk, (ii) what is the current Immigration Violation Rate for Mexican nationals, with the visa requirement in place, expressed as a numerical percentage for the most recent calendar year, (iii) what was the Immigration Violation Rate for Mexican nationals for period of 2007 to 2009, before the visa requirement was imposed; (u) what was the total number of inadmissible Mexican nationals that arrived on Canadian soil in the calendar year prior to the imposition of the visa requirement in 2009, broken down by the nature of the inadmissibility; (v) how many inadmissible Mexican nationals have arrived on Canadian soil for each calendar year since the imposition of the visa requirement in 2009, broken down by (i) calendar year, (ii) the nature of the inadmissibility; and (w)

with respect to inadmissible Mexican nationals who arrived at a Canadian Port of Entry in the calendar year prior to the imposition of the visa requirement in 2009, what was (i) the estimated cost of processing the inadmissible cases by the Canada Border Services Agency at Canadian Ports of Entry, (ii) the estimated increase in processing times for all travelers at Canadian Ports of Entry as a result of processing inadmissible Mexican nationals, (iii) the estimated total cost of removing those Mexican nationals deemed inadmissible to Canada, (iv) the average length of time it took to remove those Mexican nationals deemed inadmissible from Canada?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 67—Mr. Charlie Angus:

With respect to the Department of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), and to the gap between identified immediate and future needs and current levels in infrastructure spending for First Nations in Canada: (a) what is the government's estimate for the size of the deficit, broken down by category, such as, but not exclusively, (i) housing, (ii) education, (iii) water, (iv) roads and bridges, (v) other; (b) what is the number of hotel rooms and cost paid for by the government over the past ten years, broken down by year, due to emergency evacuations or housing shortages on reserve; (c) what is the number of schools on reserve designated as temporary structures; (d) what is the number of schools on reserve listed in (i) good condition, (ii) poor condition; (e) how many First Nations students across Canada currently attend school in facilities that INAC believes contain health and safety concerns; (f) as of January 1, 2016, what new school construction projects are the top 40 priorities for INAC across Canada; (g) for each of the schools identified in (f), how long has INAC known that health and safety concerns existed in the current facilities; (h) since 2012, what amounts from the "Community Infrastructure" line item have been reallocated either within INAC or to other government departments; (i) how many communities, with projects identified by INAC as priority capital projects, have had letters of approval issued to them; and (j) for each year from 2012 to present, how much capital building expenditure funding, for the purposes of acquiring, building, expanding, improving or replacing educational facilities built on First Nations Reserves, was planned but not spent on schools and why, broken down by (i) year, (ii) community?

(Return tabled)

Question n° 68—Ms. Irene Mathysen:

With regard to Veterans Affairs Canada, for the fiscal years 2014-2015 and 2015-2016: (a) what was the amount of funding provided by Veterans Affairs Canada for each of the following organizations or establishments that it is partners with, (i) Helmets to Hardhats, (ii) Operational Stress Injury Clinics (OSICs), (iii) Royal Canadian Legion, (iv) all Long-term Care Facilities accommodating veterans, (v) contract beds for veterans run by provinces, (vi) Operational Stress Injury National Network, (vii) OSIC Vancouver, (viii) Operational Trauma and Stress Support Center (OTSSC) Esquimalt, (ix) OSIC Carewest, (x) OSIC Edmonton, (xi) OTSSC Edmonton, (xii) OSIC Deer Lodge, (xiii) OSIC Parkwood, (xiv) OSIC Royal Ottawa, (xv) OTSSC Ottawa, (xvi) OTSSC Petawawa, (xvii) OTSSC Valcartier, (xviii) OSIC Sainte-Anne, (xix) Operational Stress Injury Residential Treatment Clinic, (xx) OSIC Centre hospitalier universitaire de Quebec, (xxi) Horizon Health OSIC Fredericton, (xxii) Nova Scotia Health Authority OSIC Halifax, (xxiii) OTSSC Halifax, (xxiv) OTSSC Gagetown; (b) what percentage of the organization's funding comes from Veterans Affairs Canada for the organizations identified in (a); (c) how are outcomes from programs measured for the organizations identified in (a); (d) what were the outcomes for each program for the organizations identified in (a); and (e) how long has each organization or establishment been in receipt of money from Veterans Affairs for the organizations and establishments identified in (a)?

(Return tabled)

*The Budget*Question No. 69—**Ms. Irene Mathyssen:**

With regard to Veterans Affairs Canada, for the fiscal years 2014-2015 and 2015-2016: (a) what actions has the Department taken to address concerns from Veterans and stakeholders, including (i) dissatisfaction with the lump sum Disability Award, (ii) calls from the Veterans Ombudsman and the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs (ACVA) to further increase Earnings Loss Benefit payments and further enhance the Permanent Impairment Allowance, (iii) more mental health and caregiver support for Veterans suffering from Operation Stress Injuries, and their families, (iv) greater focus on supporting successful transition, (v) improved communications, outreach and program delivery; (b) how much funding has been allocated for each of the areas identified in (a); and (c) what reports or studies have been undertaken or completed for each of the areas identified in (a)?

(Return tabled)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, finally I ask that the remaining questions be allowed to stand at this time.

The Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed consideration of the motion that this House approve in general the budgetary policy of the government, and of the amendment, and of the amendment to the amendment.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the member. I listened to her speech, and one of the things I found amazing is that the member does not seem to recognize that the Liberal government made a commitment to provide a tax cut for the middle class. True to form, the Liberal government under the Prime Minister delivered on that commitment to cut the middle-class tax. In fact, as part of the budget implementation, it was necessary to bring legislation through the House.

What I think most Canadians would find surprising is that the Conservative Party voted against a tax break to Canada's middle class. My question for the member is this. Can she please elaborate for Canadians as to why the Conservative Party voted against giving middle-class Canadians the opportunity to have a tax break? This is something that the middle class needs. It helps our economy. A healthy, stronger middle-class delivers a healthier and stronger Canadian economy. Liberals understand that. Why does the Conservative Party not understand that?

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question and his attention to my speech. I do appreciate that.

Within that legislation there are two pieces, and within the first piece about the tax cut there was an implicit promise. The promise was that any tax changes would be revenue neutral. We now know it will cost Canadian taxpayers \$1.4 billion, so it will come back at the end of the day in the form of another tax.

However, the other reason that it was very important to stand our ground with respect to the passing of this legislation was because the Liberal government sought to lower the limits of the tax-free savings accounts within that same piece. That is a very important vehicle for Canadians to save money. As well, I do not think the Liberals understand that it also substitutes as pools of capital for small start-ups in this country.

I think the Minister of Finance understood it, though, because he clearly said in his book, *The Real Retirement*, the following: "TFsas, introduced in 2009, are currently too new and the contribution limits too low". They were too low at \$5,000 at that point. However, he went on to say, "Most likely, they will grow in popularity as appreciation for their specific advantages grows".

The member should maybe ask his Minister of Finance why he suddenly changed his advice.

• (1520)

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I too listened to the speech from the hon. member for Milton, and one of the things that concerned me in the budget was the removal of universality for child care benefits for families. I know in Chilliwack—Hope, for instance, a nurse and a dairy farmer, or a firefighter and a teacher, are working-class people and their combined incomes would make them ineligible for any of the new child benefits.

With the Conservative government, the benefits were universal. Every child was supported and valued no matter what situation those children were in. I wonder if the member for Milton could talk about some of the examples she has heard of in her riding where middle-class families and blue-collar workers are being excluded from child care benefits because of the arbitrary nature of the current government's program.

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his great work on this file, along with the member for Elgin—Middlesex—London.

I have read *Hansard*, going back to when the government first introduced the universal child care benefits and the importance of universality at the time. What members said in the 1960s and what we say today is exactly the same thing, which is that every child in Canada deserves to have the support of their government. That is exactly the reason why we chose to introduce universality.

One thing we can take from this budget is the following. In 2006, the Liberals at the time campaigned vigorously against our introduction of the universal child care benefit, to the point where they said that we could not give money to parents or families because they would spend it on beer and popcorn.

The Liberals have seen the light. Not only have they brought it back, but they have increased it in some cases. However, they have taken away universality, which is a great difficulty for a lot of Canadians who simply do not understand that if their family income is \$92,000 a year, they will not benefit from any of these new plans.

The Budget

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today is an important day to debate the 2016 budget because a lot of what was said by the Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister during the election have now become broken promises.

The Liberals asked for a mandate to run a very modest short-term deficit in order to make some very specific investments that they claimed would be focused on growing the economy. They made specific promises to Canadians. I learned a long time ago, along with a lot of other parliamentarians, that actions speak louder than words. Let me be clear. Canadians did not give the government a blank cheque to borrow and spend as it wished and as it wanted to. They did not vote for reckless spending without a fiscal plan.

Then the Minister of Finance decided that all of these fiscal promises and commitments really did not matter. He decided that it would be a lot easier to interpret the election results as a mandate to spend as much as he wanted, for as long as he wanted, on whatever he wanted. He is obliterating all of the party's fiscal anchors and betraying his promises to Canadians.

Let us look at what has actually happened.

The \$10 billion deficit that was promised has become a \$30 billion deficit. The plan to borrow \$25 billion over four years is now a plan to borrow over \$100 billion over four years, and counting. The debt-to-GDP ratio will rise, not fall, and the pledge for a balanced budget has been completely abandoned. The Prime Minister did not even bother trying to come up with a plan to return to balance.

Actions speak louder than words. Promises made, promises broken has become the hallmark of the Liberal government, all because it just cannot resist borrowing and spending not its money but taxpayer money.

Why exactly are we borrowing \$30 billion? What we have before us is a budget that brings Canada from a balanced budget to a \$30 billion hole for no clear reason or benefit.

There is no plan in the budget to create jobs. Almost eliminated from the budget is the mention of job creation. The Minister of Finance's job numbers from the budget have already been completely debunked by the PBO.

There is no plan to get businesses investing or to get private projects and sectors moving forward.

Only a small fraction of the \$30 billion deficit, about \$3 billion, will be spent on infrastructure, and only about half of that funding will not be spent on roads, highways and public infrastructure. The Liberals have said that they had to go into deficit to spend on infrastructure. However, \$25.4 billion of the deficit cannot be attributed to new infrastructure spending.

This budget is not about growing the economy; it is about growing the size of government. It is all about satisfying Liberal interests.

Let me quote from Mr. Charles Lammam and Hugh MacIntyre at the Fraser Institute, who stated:

The Liberals [have given] the impression that infrastructure would be a key driver of their deficit spending and that such spending would help drive long-term economic growth. Yet it turns out infrastructure spending is a surprisingly small share of the projected deficit for 2016/17. Moreover, claims that the deficit will drive future

economic growth are dubious.... \$25.4 billion of the deficit cannot be attributed to new infrastructure spending.

Not only does this budget fall short on the Liberal promises to grow the economy, it actually takes steps that will kill thousands of well-paying jobs. The choices made by the Minister of Finance in his first budget are very telling. Of course, the CBC saw its funding increase. Another billion dollars will be set aside every year to increase the benefits for public servants. These are some of the promises he chose to keep.

• (1525)

What promises did he decide to break? The promises he made to job-creating businesses.

Canadians understand that borrowed money has to be paid back, and that the Liberals will have to raise taxes to pay for this spending spree. Small businesses have been the first of one of those targets.

Let us talk for a bit about small businesses and the fact that they are the true job creators of the country. Small businesses employ 95% of our population.

Dan Kelly at the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, CFIB said that this was a "brutal" budget for small businesses. He said:

Small business owners...are deeply troubled by the ballooning deficit. What was proposed to Canadians as a short-term \$10 billion deficit plan to invest in critical infrastructure is now \$29 billion with no plan to get back to balance.... Most of the deficit is to cover a massive 7.6 per cent increase in program spending, which will do next to nothing to grow the economy.

He also said, "Small business owners know that today's deficits are tomorrow's taxes."

The budget cancels, or puts to an end, the small business credit for hiring people.

The budget abandons the Liberal promise of lowering the small business tax rate to 9%. Instead, small businesses will pay 10.5% in taxes. Quantified, that is \$900 million more per year than what was promised.

There is no plan in the budget to get businesses investing in the economy again. In particular right now, we look to the downturn in the oil and gas sector, and the over 100,000 people who have lost their jobs in the sector. We are looking at, this year alone, \$35 billion of planned projects that have been cancelled or postponed. This kind of investment creates well-paying jobs.

There is no plan in the budget to invest in the economy. If anything, the budget creates huge levels of uncertainty in the economy because Liberal spending is out of control, and the government is already raising taxes to help pay for it.

Out of the entire \$30 billion borrowing plan, only \$137 million is earmarked for business growth and innovation.

The Budget

This budget is not about growing the economy; it is about growing the size of government. Canadians did not vote for that. At the outset, I said that actions spoke louder than words. When actions do not match words and promises, then Canadians expect their government to explain in detail why we must have a different path to take. They expect government to adjust to new realities. They expect the government to maintain the core promises.

Remember those core promises, those fiscal anchors that the Prime Minister actually said to his Minister of Finance. He said that we would only spend \$10 billion on infrastructure for a short period of time, that the anchors would be locked into, returning us to balance within the term of the government and reducing the debt to GDP ratio every year during its mandate of four years.

Canadians did not vote for that and that is not what is best for Canadians. I urge all members in the House to vote against the government's reckless spending in its budget.

• (1530)

Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothesay, Lib.): Madam Speaker, again, the party opposite has it wrong. It has the facts wrong. Once again, it stands and holds itself as stewards of the economy, and says that it is the best thing to happen for the economy.

Let us look at the facts: seven deficits, two recessions, the shell game of a surplus. Let us throw in the EI premium fund. Let us throw in the rainy day fund. Let us throw in the GM stocks. Perhaps that rainy day fund could have been used to help people in Alberta. No, the party opposite used it again to create a false surplus and to put itself up as stewards of the economy.

Again, good government, like our government, is coming up with policies in a budget that is for the many, not the few.

Does the member opposite not agree that Canadians spoke with a strong voice on October 19, voting for change and a government that was going to reflect that?

Mr. Phil McColeman: Madam Speaker, I enjoyed the question and the preamble, because I was here during those times of the global economic meltdown and saw his party and the other party across the way ask the government, plead with the government, to spend more in terms of deficit spending to make sure our economy stayed afloat.

Then we decided to have a plan and tell Canadians that we would return to balance, which is exactly what we did. I am very proud to own the record of that government on saying what we would do and then doing it.

The Liberals have done the opposite. During the election campaign, they promised basic items of economic health for this country: limiting the deficit, making sure we would return to balance, keeping our debt ratio appropriate and keeping it declining, which means health to this country. They have done the opposite. They have broken every one of those promises to the Canadians who voted for them, and they sit here today smugly saying they have a mandate to do whatever they want.

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Madam Speaker, I was pleased to listen to the hon. member's speech and I want him to expand a little bit on the fact that while we were away working in

our constituencies, the parliamentary budget officer, an independent officer of this place, essentially declared that the Liberal job numbers in the budget were completely fabricated. What the Liberals presented was 40% overblown, and they would only present two years of financial data, not the five years that our government and all governments had done for the last number of decades. They were forced to release that data on a Friday afternoon.

The PBO indicated there was purposeful action to frustrate legislators in this place from being able to scrutinize the spending plans of the government.

Perhaps the hon. member could expand on what the PBO said about the budget and, quite frankly, how disappointed he might be, as I am, with the Liberals' lack of transparency in presenting it.

• (1535)

Mr. Phil McColeman: Madam Speaker, the question really drives at the credibility of promising Canadians something and then doing something very different.

It is political manoeuvring at its best when someone says they will do something and be open and transparent. In the case of the PBO, the PBO drilled down into asking the real questions behind the numbers. What the PBO found, and what we have found in looking at those numbers, is that the time horizons that formed the backdrop to how the numbers would come up were actually done over a two-year time frame instead of the more appropriate time frame of five years that every government of all political stripes prior to this one had used. When the PBO asked if the information over the five-year time frame could be provided, the Liberals refused to give it.

The hon. member can tell me if that is open and transparent.

Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothesay, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time today with the member for Yukon.

Madam Speaker, with this budget the Prime Minister and the finance minister have ushered in a new age of open and inclusive government. We said what we were going to do, we were elected with a strong majority, and with this budget, we delivered.

During the federal election, I developed a local platform based upon our federal platform. I called it my five-point plan for Saint John—Rothesay. With my team, I studied and took the promises of our federal Liberal platform and applied them to my riding of Saint John—Rothesay. I took those promises seriously.

I told my constituents that a Liberal government would tackle head-on the generational poverty that is gripping a large percentage of the city of Saint John through a child benefit that would lift 300,000 children out of poverty through investments and affordable housing and through increased funding for skills training.

I told my constituents that the Liberal Party would make historic investments in infrastructure as a long-term plan to grow our economy.

The Budget

I told my constituents that a Liberal government would cut income taxes for nine million Canadians as a way of strengthening the middle class.

I told my constituents that a Liberal government would do more for seniors than previous governments, including a 10% increase in the GIS.

I told my constituents a Liberal government would invest in social infrastructure, such as tourist sites and recreation facilities. These types of investments are encouraged by top economists and are widely seen as crucial to growing our local economy.

With its first budget, the Liberal government delivered on its plan to tackle poverty head-on. The Canada child benefit will be a historic \$23-billion investment in Canadians who need it the most. This program will help more Canadian families than any other social program since universal health care. Families with children under 18 will start receiving the benefit in July. The size of each cheque will depend upon the family, but nine out of 10 families will get more help than they do under the current existing program. A single mom with one child under the age of six, earning \$30,000 a year, will receive an annual benefit of \$6,400 tax-free. A family with two children, earning \$90,000, will receive \$5,650. That is an increase of \$2,500 from the previous system the Conservatives put in place.

As the finance minister stated, that is money in the pockets of moms and dads, money that can go directly toward eating healthier food, paying the rent, and buying new clothes for going back to school.

Coming from the city with the highest rate of child poverty in Canada, I cannot express how happy I am for the priority wards in Saint John, such as ward 3, where one out of every two children lives in poverty.

It takes an important shift in social policy to move the needle on poverty. I believe this historic investment in Canadians will finally move the needle in Saint John. I look forward to seeing how many children we can lift out of poverty in my riding and in all ridings across the nation.

As well, \$112 million will be given to anti-homeless initiatives across the country, including in my riding, which is good news to our local shelters and programs.

We would love to see a very successful at home/chez soi program that helps homeless participants get off the street and into a stable home. We would love to see what it can do for those experiencing homelessness in Saint John. We would love to see increased funding to Outflow and Coverdale, our men's and women's homeless shelters, to continue every day to do their excellent work in our community. We need to give these community leaders all the help we can.

For those experiencing unemployment in my riding, I am pleased that wait times for those in EI will be reduced from two weeks to one, making things easier on those who are experiencing financial difficulty. Even better, through labour development agreements and job fund agreements, 175 million additional dollars will go into skills training at places like the Saint John Learning Exchange, where Christina Fowler could use another full-time employee.

This funding will help underemployed and unemployed people in Saint John—Rothesay to get access to valuable job training and support. Giving someone a leg up beats giving them a handout.

● (1540)

The Liberal government has delivered on infrastructure with this budget. This year we will invest \$11.9 billion to modernize and rehabilitate public transit, water systems, and waste-water systems, provide affordable housing, and protect infrastructure systems from the effects of climate change. This is good news for my riding of Saint John—Rothesay.

With a commitment of \$3.4 billion to maintain and upgrade federal infrastructure assets, New Brunswick now has the opportunity for \$61.3 million for federal infrastructure. In addition to that, this plan adds \$8.7 million to municipal transit investment for New Brunswick, meaning significant new investment for transit infrastructure in Saint John—Rothesay.

Over the next year, our budget further commits \$51.9 million to the continued operation of three ferries in my province.

In Saint John, we have 1,400 people on waiting lists for affordable housing. This is simply unacceptable.

We have many projects that are shovel-ready. As an example, the Rothesay waste water facility has applied for necessary funding, along with the Saint John Field House.

We have developed a green transit initiative that will re-establish recently discontinued transit routes that have been eliminated because of costs. We plan to reopen these routes through a green initiative: propane-powered feeder buses. While the rest of the country is expanding transit, we cannot be moving away from it.

The Liberal government is also investing \$3.4 billion over five years to help maintain and upgrade national parks, harbours, federal airports, and border infrastructure, and to support the cleanup of contaminated federal sites across the country. This is particularly good news for Saint John's Partridge Island, an important and neglected historic site on federal land that would be a great boom to the region if it were to become a national park or come under Parks Canada.

This is also great news for our airport, which needs a longer runway.

The Budget

With around 30,000 households in New Brunswick living in poor housing, we need about 12,000 renter households for people who are spending more than 50% of their income on shelter. Studies show that New Brunswick, specifically Saint John, is suffering from chronic homelessness. This budget addresses these issues head-on with a \$2.3 billion investment over the next two years. This will effectively double the investments in the affordable housing initiative, adding \$262 million this year alone.

Budget 2016 addresses key areas of affordable housing by investing \$100 million a year in seniors' housing, \$210 million in affordable rental housing, \$90 million in victims' shelters, and \$112 million to address homelessness.

Seniors make up a large percentage of our population in Saint John—Rothesay and in the province of New Brunswick. We will help the most vulnerable seniors by increasing the guaranteed income supplement for single seniors by up to \$947 annually. This enhancement more than doubles the current maximum top-up and represents a 10% increase in maximum benefits, an increase that will improve the financial security of about 900,000 single seniors across Canada.

As we said during the election, we will restore eligibility for old age security and the GIS to 65 years of age. We are also committed to creating a new seniors price index so that old age security and GIS will accommodate rising costs.

Studies consistently show that when there is slack in the economy and interest rates are low, for every dollar a government spends on infrastructure, substantially more than one dollar of economic activity is generated. According to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, every one dollar spent on infrastructure yields \$1.20 in GDP growth.

To conclude, our first budget is a monumental piece of legislation that will kick-start this economy after 10 years of cuts from the Conservative government. Major investments in my riding, including the upgrades to EI, the Canada child benefit, infrastructure, and affordable housing, prove that budget 2016 is working for Canadians and Saint Johners in my riding of Saint John—Rothesay.

• (1545)

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened carefully to my colleague across the way and to some of the promises he made to his constituents. I want to remind him that he and his party made a number of promises to constituents all across Canada, including reducing the small business tax rate, running a deficit of no more than \$10 billion, and an immediate commitment to invest \$3 billion over the next four years to deliver more and better home care services for all Canadians. This would include more access to high-quality in-home caregivers, financial support for family care, and when necessary, palliative care.

I do not need to remind my colleagues in the House that we need to do far better in providing palliative care for Canadians, especially at this point when we are looking at the possibility of introducing Canada to physician-assisted suicide. If we cannot offer good-quality, accessible palliative care, we should not be entering the debate.

I want to ask this, for my colleague. Where is the immediate \$3 billion investment? If he is going to say it is coming next year, then really our deficit is not \$30 billion but \$33 billion. I want my colleague to answer that question.

Mr. Wayne Long: Madam Speaker, government policy in good government is about governing for the many, not the few.

With respect to palliative care, I lost my father in palliative care not too long ago. It is something that is near and dear to my heart. There are places in St. John—Rothesay like Bobby's Hope House and other initiatives that offer great care for people in their last days.

A budget is one budget in a government's mandate of four years, so let us take one thing at a time. Our priorities are as wide ranging as possible. We have initially come up with a plan to give back to middle-class families and to families living in poverty. We have a great start with our budget.

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is incredibly unfortunate that the member across rises and says that seniors can wait, that people in his riding of Saint John—Rothesay can wait for the palliative care that he himself promised.

I am pleased that he references his five-point plan. It is available on the Internet for all of us to see.

During the election campaign, the member made the following commitment to seniors in his own five-point plan. Number 4, which is seniors, says, "We need to take better care of our seniors". Point 5 f) says specifically, "We will invest \$3 billion in home care, long term, and palliative care".

The Liberals have abandoned that promise to invest \$3 billion over four years for home care, which is deeply needed in our aging population. There is also nothing in the budget for mental health, palliative care, or long-term care. Therefore, could the member for Saint John—Rothesay tell the House how he will explain to seniors, and all those constituents in his riding whom he told he would provide that money for palliative care, that he broke his word to them?

• (1550)

Mr. Wayne Long: Madam Speaker, I find this a bit rich coming from the NDP, a party that actually ran on austerity and was going to balance the budget at any cost. Now all of a sudden the NDP simply is asking where is this and where is that.

I am absolutely proud to stand up and say what we did for seniors. There is a 10% increase to the GIS for single seniors living in poverty. There is a price index for seniors.

The Budget

It is one budget in a mandate, and I am very proud of our commitment. I know seniors across Canada are very proud of our Liberal government and the budget that we put forth a few weeks ago.

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is impossible to overestimate how delighted I am with the understanding of and service to the north of the Minister of Finance, the Prime Minister, and the other ministers.

A few summers ago, the Prime Minister spent the better part of a week in my riding, attending AFN meetings and meeting Yukon chiefs and hundreds of Yukoners to better understand our northern views and issues and the people of the north. This is respect for the north.

Shortly after Parliament started sitting, my staff said I was invited to talk to the Minister of Finance about our issues in the north. I was astounded that I, from the nation's farthest riding from Ottawa, in the remote northwest, Yukon, would be one of the first people that the Minister of Finance consulted. It was such a gratifying indication of his respect for rural and northern Canada; and he listened, as I will outline later in my speech. For so many issues from the north and for the poor of the country being in the budget, I can only express my deepest gratification.

In our inspiring election platform, we made many promises to implement in the next four years. Many people have approached me and said how delighted they are that so many of those promises have already been kept by the Prime Minister and cabinet, and we are just starting the four years.

Today I will concentrate on items related primarily to the north and also to poverty.

Our northern strategy is about the people of the north, first and foremost, and the Minister of Finance and government came through in spades. The very large increase in the northern allowance, 33%, bringing \$10.2 million to Yukoners over two years, is a huge reflection of the government's understanding of the high cost of survival and just making ends meet in the north.

I and my colleagues from NWT and Labrador and the Minister of Fisheries from Nunavut lobbied hard for this, and we are excited that the biggest increase for individual northerners in recent memory has come to fruition. The Canadian Chamber of Commerce also lobbied for this to help employers retain employees in the north. If this were the only benefit done for the north in this budget, then this budget would still be a huge win for those living in the north and the Arctic, but this is not all we received.

The major funding for our regional development agency, CanNor, was expiring. The SINED funding was expiring last March 31. I, our northern colleagues, and organizations like chambers of commerce and the Yukon College, who have benefited from CanNor funding, lobbied hard to have the funding reinstated, and indeed it was. The minister listened, and there is \$40 million over the next two years.

The two biggest sectors in my economy in the Yukon are mining and infrastructure. Again, the government came through. Last summer, I exhorted that the mineral exploration tax credit not be ruled out in our platform, and indeed, that came true. I am sure that the chambers of mines in the Yukon, in the north, and even

nationally talked to the Minister of Natural Resources and the Minister of Finance about this important exploration tax credit at a time when mining is down. Again, the Minister of Finance listened.

Tourism, often the biggest employer in my economy, has the biggest sector of RDP of probably any riding in the country. Therefore, more than anyone, we were delighted with the \$50 million going to Destination Canada to market Canada. Again, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce also lobbied for an increase in Destination Canada funds.

Another huge sector in the Canadian economy is culture, bigger in our economy than most ridings in the country. Therefore, the cultural sector was delighted with the increase or reinstatement of programming in the Yukon and across the country.

Also, the IT sector is a huge economic sector in my riding. The sector appreciates the major investments in this budget in IT, science, research, and clean technologies.

When the food mail program changed to nutrition north in 2010-11, I lobbied hard that it would be devastating, and obviously it has been. The people of the Arctic have been so devastated, those who can least afford it in Canada. Certainly, we all appreciate the increases to the nutrition north program in this budget.

Paul Martin made a sea change in dealing with aboriginal people in this country; listening to them and coming up with a huge amount, bigger than any government at any level in the history of Canada, with \$5 billion in the Kelowna accord for projects that first nations, Inuit, and Métis had come up with. It was bottom-up. People dreamed, after that had been cancelled by subsequent governments, that this huge amount might come back again.

● (1555)

Many people never thought that huge amount of \$8.4 billion of the budget increase would actually come. Whether it is for aboriginal languages, water and sewer, aboriginal skills, or court worker programs, it all is a sign that the government is trying to reduce the disparity in the lives of aboriginal people and other Canadians.

Of course, our people spoke passionately at meetings about a national inquiry into missing aboriginal people, and we are all so moved that the inquiry into missing and murdered aboriginal women and girls has been started.

The Budget

As I have been saying for over a decade, climate change affects the north more than any other place in the world, and we are delighted that there are many items related to that in the budget, but especially that we in the north can do our own part, with \$10.7 million for renewable projects in northern and aboriginal Canada and communities that are presently on diesel.

The benefits for the north in my riding go on and on: \$8 million to Yukoners for affordable housing; up to \$850,000 for transit for Whitehorse; increased services to northern veterans; large increases in social and green infrastructure; a \$23.2 million increase in the Yukon government's transfer payments; an infrastructure bank; \$500 million over five years for rural and remote Internet; \$10 million to improve the major northern projects regulatory review; investments in northern national parks; millions for research and traditional knowledge in the north before resources develop, such as drilling in the fragile Arctic waters; increased EI benefits for the Whitehorse region; funding for adult education like that presently delivered by Yukon College; \$6.4 for northern cultural and recreational facilities; up to \$13.1 million to upgrade the federal infrastructure; and middle-class tax cuts for so many Canadians.

I see my colleagues in the House are beginning to think this is the greatest gold rush since the Klondike in 1898, and they all want to move to the Yukon. They can see why I am so delighted in the budget.

When I left Parliament in 2011, there were at least three of us who were very passionate about fighting poverty: Tony Martin, a wonderful human being from the NDP, and Mike Savage who is now mayor of Halifax, who both spoke so passionately about fighting poverty. It is certainly what I believe, and I am delighted to be able to come back to a government that holds that as one of its highest principles. That is \$118 million over two years for a national homelessness strategy; more money for affordable housing, for women's shelters; a 10% increase in the GIS for Canada's poorest seniors, which will help 900,000 seniors; child tax benefits.

This is the biggest transformation of social programs since national health care. It is probably my biggest priority. Imagine a low-income mother getting \$6,400 for a child whom she is having a hard time supporting. With that, how much nutritious food could she buy? How much clothing, how many sports programs and arts programs, how much for supplies and funding for school trips out of \$6,400, tax-free, to make her life so much easier and let her feel she could deliver what a mother should be able to deliver to her children?

This will raise more than 300,000 children out of poverty. This is what the government I believe in is all about, and this is why I am so proud of this budget and want to support it. I thank the finance minister for delivering for the north.

• (1600)

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the hon. member's comments with regard to the budget, which really fell short of the mark in delivering their promises. I would like the member to expand on some information about the nutrition north program, because with accuracy in numbers, we do see that the program is actually receiving a \$2.5 million cut compared to last year. I would like to understand how we

are going to achieve this equality with all these Liberal broken promises.

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Madam Speaker, first of all, there are not "all these Liberal broken promises". I am not sure what the member is referring to. However, in nutrition north, there are two types of funding increases, which I think the member will appreciate. When the program first started, the funding subsidy was for transportation. It was more easily accountable. It was changed to the retailers, and the people in the Arctic, even the normally very quiet Inuit people, rose up. They were so devastated.

There are increases for two things. First is to increase the funding pot; second is to increase the amount. There were a number of communities that were left out of the program, and one of the criteria, unbelievably, was that if people had applied before to the food mail program, they would be eligible for nutrition north. So what if they had not applied? What if we did not apply for our pension? Would we be no longer eligible? Therefore, there is money to include those communities as well.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Madam Speaker, in response to the last question, my colleague was not sure to which broken promises my colleague was referring, so I would like to remind him of just a few. I do not have time, by any means, to go into all of them.

Reducing the business tax rate is a clear broken promise. Small businesses are really devastated by this broken promise. Running a deficit of no more than \$10 billion is a broken promise. There is quite a bit of difference between \$30 billion and \$10 billion. I think my colleague would agree with that. As I commented a few minutes ago, there is the broken promise on extending palliative care and home care services.

However, I have a different question that I would like to ask. In relation to the finance department's report, April 2015 to January 2016, it clearly indicates a budgetary surplus of \$4.3 billion. It states, "For the April 2015 to January 2016 period of the 2015–16 fiscal year, the Government posted a budgetary surplus of \$4.3 billion". This is from the finance department of the Government of Canada.

Does my colleague agree that the report from the Government of Canada's finance department is accurate?

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Madam Speaker, I would like to address those four issues.

There is one more comment on Nutrition North that I did not have time for, and that is we are reviewing the whole system and looking for ways to help people with food in the north.

The Budget

On small businesses, the member mentioned a number of promises. He probably was not listening to the first part of my speech when I reminded people that a number of the promises were for four years, and we have barely started the first year. Everyone should stay tuned.

Obviously, palliative care, home care, these types of things, are in negotiation with the provinces. They are not done overnight. I do not think there is any disagreement on the priority.

I am also delighted that all the money from the programs that would go to very poor and needy people will be put right back into businesses, which will help them out immensely.

Finally, there have been a lot of discussions about the deficit and how much we are investing. It is very similar to what was in our platform. However, as the member knows, when the ultimate deficit figures came out, due to the reduction in the economy and the decrease in oil prices, our investments were added to other factors beyond the government's control.

● (1605)

Mr. Kerry Diotte (Edmonton Griesbach, CPC): Madam Speaker, today I will be splitting my time with the member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo.

I stand in the House today as the voice of taxpayers for Edmonton Griesbach. As a fiscal watchdog, it is important for me to stand up to our out-of-control Liberal spending that will lead to waste, more debt and higher taxes.

In fact, the last economic outlook showed that government revenues were holding up better than expected. GDP growth in the last quarter of 2015 was also higher than expected. Because of good Conservative economic management, the Liberal government inherited a surplus of \$3.2 billion. That is a fact that has been confirmed by Finance Canada in case anybody is wondering about it. However, the Liberals squandered that in less than 100 days.

During the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression, Canada had the best job creation and economic growth record among G7 countries. Across the country, especially in my riding, hard-working Canadians are worried about keeping their jobs.

The budget clearly shows that the government has no plan for jobs. For my constituents who are struggling to find employment, the disappointment continues. The budget extends the duration of EI benefits for areas hard hit by the slowdown in the economy, but it overlooks my constituents. Canadians living in Calgary, northern Alberta, southern Alberta are getting these new benefits, but Edmontonians are being snubbed, and that is just not right.

I have heard from many of my constituents on this. They are outraged, and demand that they get the same treatment, and rightly so. This is simply not fair. What is worse, the Liberals' plan to raise taxes on job-creating businesses will only make it harder for out-of-work Canadians to find employment.

In their platform and throughout the Liberal election campaign, they promised Canadians they would reduce the small business tax to 9% by 2019, but now they will not do that. This is a costly broken promise. Canadians did not vote for broken promises. Canadians want a plan that delivers jobs and economic growth.

Let us remember this. It is the private sector that creates jobs and drives economic growth, and there are so many commercially viable projects all over our great country that are just raring to go. I am talking about the energy east pipeline. I am talking about upgrades to telecommunications networks. How about extending the Billy Bishop Airport runway? Instead of borrowing more money with no jobs plan, why will the Liberals not take steps to make these projects happen?

However, as shown in the budget, job creation is just not the priority of the Liberals. Clearly, Liberal spending is out of control. It is enough to make this fiscal watchdog howl.

The Liberals had more than \$3 billion in the bank at the end of last year. I do not think we can remind people enough about that. The Liberals have blown through that money and now they are breaking yet another election promise.

The Liberals told Canadians that they would only borrow \$10 billion in 2016, but in fact the budget reveals they are borrowing about \$30 billion from taxpayers. Now that is real change, is it not? Whereas they told Canadians they would balance the books in 2019, there is no balanced budgets in sight. That is real change too, sadly.

Moving forward, the Liberals will continue to borrow billions of dollars to pay for their spending promises. The Liberal plan does not create jobs and it does not control spending. The fact is that no matter how much money we borrow, average Canadians know that we always have to pay it back.

● (1610)

Under our former Conservative government, the federal tax burden was at its lowest level in 50 years. We lowered taxes 180 times, saving the average family of four almost \$7,000 per year.

According to a report from the parliamentary budget office, lower and middle-income Canadians have benefited the most from our tax plan, which is contrary to what the Liberals have said.

The Liberal government is now digging into the pockets of Canadians once again. Already, it is raising taxes on personal savings, workers, and small businesses. The Liberals' ballooning deficit means higher taxes for hard-working Canadians, job-creating businesses, and future generations. Canadians just cannot afford to have their pockets picked any further.

This budget is a real disappointment for Canadians who are looking for real action to create jobs and long-term economic prosperity. It has no plan for job creation, it borrows about \$30 billion, and it takes hard-earned money out of the pockets of my constituents and Canadians right across the country.

The Budget

On this side of the House, we know that this is not the recipe for long-term prosperity. That is why we demand a real plan to create jobs. We will fight to keep more money in the pockets of hard-working Canadians, including those in my riding of Edmonton Griesbach. We will push the Liberals to live within their means and not borrow billions of dollars that will have to be paid back by hard-working Canadians and future generations. I will fight hard for Canadians on these fronts, and I know my colleagues will as well.

Mr. Mike Bossio (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, Lib.): Madam Speaker, our government is looking to invest in Canadians. I think we have learned over the last decade that we cannot cut our way to growth. Rather, we need to invest our way to growth. That means investing in innovation, in public transit, in increased productivity, and in digital infrastructure. However, most important, it means putting more money into the pockets of people so they can spend that money to generate that growth in our economy, to help those small businesses, and to help all of our communities.

The Canada child benefit would do just that. On average, it would put \$2,300 into the pockets of nine out of ten Canadian families. Surely, the member would agree that the middle-class tax cut will put money into the pockets of people and that this money will help generate that growth in our local communities. Surely, the member can agree that this budget will do exactly that, put money into the pockets of people who need it the most so they can spend it in our local economies to generate that economic growth and to help our small businesses.

Mr. Kerry Diotte: Madam Speaker, when most people go looking for investments, they go to a bank or their stockbroker, they buy something, and they realize a profit. With respect to these investments, the government is taking triple the money it said it would from the taxpayer, out of the pockets of hard-working Canadians. What is the payoff? It is more debt. That is not an investment and it is simply wrong.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like my colleague to comment on the fact that the Liberals have already introduced a bill on tax breaks that will not help the least wealthy 60% of the population.

In this budget, the Liberals also broke their promise to eliminate the tax loophole for CEO stock options, which is, again, good for the richest people.

They said they would increase the guaranteed income supplement for the poorest people, seniors, but they will not do it until July. They are doing all kinds of things for the rich now, but seniors and the poor will have to wait.

What does my colleague think about that?

•(1615)

[*English*]

Mr. Kerry Diotte: Madam Speaker, certainly the Liberals' budget is full of broken promises and that is the problem. If I had been a Liberal voter in this past election, I would be deeply disappointed to see that what I voted for is not at all what the Liberals have delivered. It is shameful. I cannot imagine there is one Liberal on that side of the House who in his or her heart honestly feels this

budget is anything but a deception of the Liberals' electoral campaign.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would note that the government will be investing over \$440 million to enhance the Canada Revenue Agency's ability to detect, audit, and prosecute tax evasion, and that will result in a twelvefold increase in the number of tax schemes examined by the CRA. Is that not a good return on investment?

Mr. Kerry Diotte: Madam Speaker, I think the hon. member over there is probably talking to the member over here about that. Obviously, most Canadians want everybody to pay their fair share of taxes.

Speaking of taxes, the problem with the budget is that the government is extracting so many taxes from the wallet, picking the pockets of Canadians. That is the real crime here. That is the overriding crime.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member premised his whole speech on the fact that the Conservatives are concerned about the deficit, and I would argue that his speech was factually incorrect. I would ask the member if he would at the very least acknowledge that the Conservatives did in fact inherit a surplus and they converted it into a deficit. That is a reality. That is a fact. This government inherited a deficit. Again, that is a reality. That is a fact.

Mr. Kerry Diotte: Madam Speaker, I would just say no.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an opportunity for me to stand up today and speak to the 2016 budget.

However, I do have to overlay two significant events. It was only about two days ago that it was the second anniversary of the tragic and early passing of former minister Flaherty. I remember him in 2009, when we had the worst global recession in Canadian history. He committed to a stimulus plan. I remember him standing up at the time and saying we would spend this much money, that it would be targeted and invested in infrastructure. He had a clear plan to get back to a balanced budget. I have to contrast this to the current plan that is sitting before us. It is really quite shameful, and Canadians should be very concerned.

This plan is full of broken promises. The Liberal government said that the debt would be no more than \$10 billion. It is going to be much larger than \$10 billion. It had committed to having a plan to get back to a balanced budget, and it has not done that. It committed to transparency, and the parliamentary budget officer and the former parliamentary budget officer have said that transparency in the document is absolutely shameful.

It indicated that the middle class was struggling and that it was a real issue, with what I would call misleading graphs. Since 2005, the middle class have done exceptionally well in Canada, in spite of how the Liberals have portrayed the struggles of the middle class. That is very ingenious, for sure.

The Budget

It is interesting. We have had two weeks back at home, and as I walked in downtown Kamloops, people came up to me and said please tell the Liberals to stop spending my money. That happened a number of times.

However, where I want to focus the majority of my remarks today is on chapter 3. That is where the Liberals are articulating the additional planned spending of \$8.4 billion to support indigenous people and indigenous communities.

I want to say upfront that we support those dollars. We very clearly support the investments. All we need is to hear of the horrific situation in Attawapiskat, with the suicides that are happening, or we look at the Pikangikum fire. We see the pictures of those beautiful young children who lost their lives in a fire due to overcrowding, in clearly what could have been a preventable situation. In Kashechewan, they had an infectious outbreak, which in most communities would have had more rapid attention and would have been better controlled. With our history of colonialism and residential schools, we have communities in significant and clear trouble that need support.

Although we do support the dollars, we have real concerns about how this is going to happen. Our concerns focus in three areas. One area is transparency. I will go into a little detail with each of these. On transparency and accountability, throughout the chapter they talk about a transformative agenda. I would say it is not, because it is more program spending. I will get into some details there. It certainly is a transactional budget. It might have some significant needs that are going to be met, but I did not see transformation, which clearly is going to be something we need.

At the same time that the government is proposing \$8.4 billion in new spending, it absolutely eviscerated the First Nations Financial Transparency Act. I will quote the Prime Minister, and then I need to ask why it does not also apply to our first nations communities. He said:

We have also committed to set a higher bar for openness and transparency in government. It is time to shine more light on government to ensure it remains focused on the people it serves. Government and its information should be open by default. If we want Canadians to trust their government, we need a government that trusts Canadians.

Those are very fine words, but they have let the first nations community members down, and it is absolutely appalling.

• (1620)

I have heard the arguments about why this act should have been eviscerated, and I think the arguments do not hold water. One of them was that they have business interests and they are going to be shared widely. There are two things to say there.

The first thing is that if we go into the actual audited statements, one line, “a shareholder”—and I would argue that community members are shareholders—gets much more information that was in maybe one line as we go through these whole reports. Therefore, the argument that it would impact business interests is absolutely false.

The other thing we have heard regularly is that the Department of Aboriginal Affairs gets this information, the minister has the information, so that is good enough. I am sorry, but that is not good enough. That goes directly against what the Prime Minister has

said. This is about the people in the community having access to the information of how their leaders are spending the money that is given to them.

Earlier, the minister indicated that they just have to ask and not many people are asking, so it is not really a problem. Why should a band member have to go into a band office to ask for information or have to go to the minister? It should be out there. It should be transparent.

I do not think that we are alone. Often the newspapers are not always our friends, but let me have a quick run through some headlines.

There is “8.4 billion reasons to require oversight”. That was *The London Free Press*.

“Accountability must be a priority” was from Saskatoon's *The StarPhoenix*.

The *Calgary Herald*, I think when it was looking at the decision to gut this act, said, “Choosing to turn a blind eye to their spending is a politically motivated sop”.

Another one, from the *Vancouver Sun*, was “Spending transparency should accompany new money...say critics”.

Certainly, I think we are not the only ones saying this.

A number of band members have come to me privately. A few have been willing to go more public. They are saying the same thing. They are saying they should have the right to basic information that one can get from any other level of government.

The B.C. regional chief said he did not have any problems with the legislation, that they have a history of transparency. I agree there are many bands that have a very good history of transparency. However, then he said that some chiefs did not like the imposition of it.

If there were an MP in this House or in the Senate, or an MLA or a mayor, who said they do not want to share information because it is an imposition, I think it would be an incredible injustice to the people of the communities.

That is one of our biggest concerns. At the same time that there is \$8.4 billion to do incredibly important things to improve the lives of community members, there is no accountability to the community members themselves. That is a huge problem.

The other thing I did not see, and hopefully as the plans evolve we are going to see more, is on the accountability. The money for first nations' education is incredibly important. The Liberals said they had committed I think \$3 billion for home care, and they said it was not in this budget because they had not worked out the plan with the provinces. They said they could not put it in there because they had not worked out the plan.

They have not worked out the plan around education, but they put in the money, so why the different standards? The money absolutely needs to go for education, but where are the standards? Where is the accountability? Where is the plan?

The Budget

Again, I wish I could talk a bit about the difference between transformational and transactive, but I would like to conclude by saying that I cannot support the budget overall. I do support \$8.4 billion, but, please, let us put in measures around transparency, accountability, and true transformation in terms of the fiscal relationship between Canada and the indigenous people of our country.

• (1625)

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech. I heard her say that people go to her office complaining, and saying please ask the Liberals not to spend money. However, I can assure her that in my riding and at my office, people are coming to thank the government for investing money.

My question for the hon. member is this. If this historical investment in green infrastructure, in protecting our environment, and in our social housing does not create jobs, what will create jobs on the other side of the House in their agenda?

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Madam Speaker, one of the best job creators that is right there on the doorstep waiting to happen is the energy east pipeline: billions of dollars, Canadian steel, Canadian workers, Canadian product.

I am very proud of our previous government's record in terms of infrastructure. It is a very interesting fact to note that the Liberals talked about water for first nations communities and how important it is. In actual fact, we spent more dollars in terms of improving water in first nations communities, and we did all that and balanced the budget.

[Translation]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague is probably aware that residential construction costs have risen sharply. This is due in large part to the cost of materials. The Liberals promised to cut the GST on construction materials to boost rental housing construction, but that is yet another broken promise. Does she think the Liberals should have cut the GST to help with new rental housing construction?

• (1630)

[English]

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Madam Speaker, certainly the cost of housing, especially in places like British Columbia, in Vancouver, is of significant concern. I have three children in their twenties who in the next few years might be looking at purchasing their first home. One of the tools that my children were using when they had opportunities at different times to invest was a TFSA. Their TFSAs were intended to ultimately provide maybe a down payment on a home. Certainly, moving that limit back to \$5,000, for youth throughout this country who might have a small inheritance and want to protect it until they are ready, is another example of what was poor policy within this budget.

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo for her excellent work on this file and for the compassion that she shows for all British Columbians and certainly for indigenous peoples in her riding and across the province.

I wanted to talk a bit about the funding that is in the budget. Again, our government when we were on that side of the aisle made unprecedented investments in first nations communities. However, what we said was that when it came for instance to first nations education, increased funding would not replace reform, that the system was broken and was not serving the students, the parents, nor the communities that it was designed to serve, and that the answer was to reform the system at the same time as making investments in it.

I would like the member to comment on the difference in approach from our previous government insisting that there be reforms before those investments of \$1.9 billion were made. Could she talk about what is missing in this budget?

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Madam Speaker, that goes right back to the accountability piece, and I have to again draw the contrast. The money for home care, the Liberals claim is not in the budget because they did not have the plan and they did not know what was happening. The money for first nations is in the budget, although they do not have a plan. Again, accountability and important dollars are absolutely critical for improving the first nations education system, but again a structure and a plan are clearly lacking.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Essex, International Trade; the hon. member for Brantford—Brant, Finance.

Resuming debate. The hon. Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs.

[English]

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time today with the member for Laval—Les Îles.

I would first like to acknowledge that we are on the traditional territory of the Algonquin people.

[Translation]

I am proud to rise to speak to budget 2016 and the historic investments we are proposing for indigenous peoples.

[English]

This budget is about taking a fundamentally new approach and charting a new course for Canada for indigenous peoples and for the north. The government is absolutely committed to renewing the relationship between the crown and indigenous peoples in Canada on a foundation of recognition of rights, respect, co-operation, and partnership.

Coast to coast to coast we have heard gratitude that the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance have ensured that budget 2016 has now put real action behind those words.

National Chief Perry Bellegarde said:

The Budget

This budget invests in important priorities for First Nations and all Canadians. Investments in housing, clean water, education, and child welfare will bring long-needed relief for those living in third world conditions, and build a stronger economy for everyone.

Clément Chartier said:

I am pleased that there has been an unprecedented recognition of and allocation of funds for the Métis Nation.

ITK President Natan Obed said:

It is a positive change to see Inuit as well as specific Inuit regions recognized in the budget text.

We know that top-down, made-in-Ottawa solutions simply do not work. In 1975, in the status of women report “Speaking Together”, Northwest Territories leader Nellie Cournoyea stated, “Paternalism has been a total failure.” Unfortunately, it is still true.

Effective solutions will only be developed through working in full partnership with indigenous communities and leadership and by supporting indigenous-led approaches.

To support this essential engagement, budget 2016 invests \$96 million over five years and \$10 million thereafter to support the work of indigenous representative organizations.

[Translation]

The historic investments in budget 2016 will help us to turn the page and begin a new chapter in the relationship between the government and indigenous peoples in Canada.

[English]

As we move forward together, we must close the unacceptable gaps in social and economic outcomes between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples in Canada.

As a critical first step towards closing these gaps, budget 2016 lifts the existing 2% cap and invests \$8.4 billion over five years to improve the socio-economic conditions of indigenous peoples and their communities.

In addition to this important first step, we will work in full partnership to establish a new fiscal relationship that gives indigenous communities sufficient, predictable, and sustained funding.

•(1635)

[Translation]

These long-needed investments in favour of indigenous peoples and their communities will benefit all Canadians.

[English]

Indigenous peoples in Canada are the youngest and fastest growing part of the population. Education is critical to opening doors and providing opportunity. Unfortunately, chronic underfunding of the first nations education system has held students back.

[Translation]

Currently, only 38% of first nations people aged 18 to 24 living on reserve have completed high school, compared to 87% of other Canadians.

[English]

We cannot leave yet another generation of indigenous youth behind. That is why budget 2016 invests \$2.6 billion over five years in primary and secondary education for first nations children living on reserve. This funding will include language and cultural programming, reflecting the unique circumstances and needs of first nations children.

We will also respect first nations control over first nations education and will never act unilaterally on this issue.

[Translation]

As I have said, we will work nation-to-nation, in partnership, to help first nations achieve their goals and to support first nations-led initiatives.

[English]

We know that the students' achievement, health and well-being also depend on the quality of their school. That is why we will also provide nearly \$1 billion over five years to improve education buildings and facilities on reserve.

[Translation]

In addition, the National Framework on Early Learning and Child Care will allow us to determine the best approach to providing quality early learning and child care on reserve.

[English]

Budget 2016 would provide \$100 million in 2017-18 to enhance indigenous early learning and child care. We know that child and family services on reserve must also be totally overhauled and we are committed to working with Cindy Blackstock, the AFN, the First Nations Child & Family Caring Society of Canada, and the provinces and territories to design a system that will work for first nations children and keep their families together. As a start, we will provide nearly \$635 million over five years to the first nations child and family services program, with the goal of proactive support for children and their families rather than intervening once harm has occurred.

[Translation]

This budget will also make tremendous strides in developing public infrastructure to improve the quality of life of indigenous peoples. As a pillar of inclusive economic growth, infrastructure investments in indigenous communities will help create jobs and enhance the quality of life of first nations and Inuit communities.

The Budget

• (1640)

[English]

We will invest \$1.2 billion in support of social infrastructure in first nations, Inuit, and northern communities, part of the first days of the government's long-term infrastructure plan. It is an unfortunate reality that many first nations people on reserve live with inadequate housing and overcrowding. There will be \$554.3 million provided over two years to address the most urgent housing needs on reserve. This, however, is only a first step.

We will also work with first nations communities over the coming year on a long-term approach to support the construction and maintenance of housing on reserve, in line with the needs of those communities.

[Translation]

The need for housing is also high in northern and Inuit communities. That is why those communities will receive up to \$177.7 million over two years through the CMHC investment in affordable housing initiative.

[English]

First nations also expect, as do all Canadians, access to safe, clean, and reliable drinking water. They should never have to worry that the water flowing through their taps might endanger their families' health. Budget 2016 provides \$2.24 billion to first nations communities to improve on-reserve water infrastructure and waste management. This funding will support our commitment to put an end to long-term boil water advisories on reserve within five years. Infrastructure funding will also include \$10.4 million over three years to support the renovation and construction of new shelters for victims of family violence in first nations communities.

[Translation]

Language is an expression of identity and a way to transmit values, beliefs, and stories from generation to generation.

[English]

We also understand that an individual's secure, personal, cultural identity is the foundation upon which success is built. While we work in partnership with indigenous communities to establish long-term and sustainable funding to support the promotion, preservation and enhancement of indigenous language, we have extended funding for the aboriginal language initiative.

These historic advancements in indigenous peoples in northern communities will facilitate transformational change and support a prosperous shared future. This budget represents concrete action to renew the relationship between the crown and indigenous people in Canada on a foundation of recognition of rights, respect, co-operation, and partnership. For the benefit of indigenous peoples, for northerners, and for all Canadians, I urge all members to support this budget.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the minister for her speech and what truly are some good measures in the budget.

I also want to refer to the comments of her leader, who said, "We have also committed to set a higher bar for openness and

transparency in government. It is time to shine more light on government to ensure it remains focused on the people it serves".

Earlier in question period, the minister said that if first nations community members wanted to know something, they could ask her, or they could perhaps go to the band office and ask. To me and I think most people in Canada, shining a light means having that information proactively disclosed in an easy manner so that people do not have to ask and it is readily and easily accessible.

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: Madam Speaker, I draw to the member's attention the fact that in most of the first nations communities across the country the audited statements are proactively disclosed to all of their members. In the few where that is not the case, it is possible for those members to receive that information from our department, but that number is remarkably small.

We believe in transparency and accountability, and so do first nations. That is why in the Kelowna accord the proposal of a first nations auditor general was put forward. We were very disappointed that the previous government tore that agreement up.

• (1645)

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, as the minister knows, the missing and murdered women inquiry is a significant initiative that the government has undertaken. In my community, where the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls coalition was founded some 26 years ago, we have high hopes and dreams for the reality of the inquiry to come forward to address these historical issues.

Incorporated in that, the coalition has nine points to which I hope the minister can commit to incorporating into the inquiry. This includes ensuring that this is a national, as opposed to a federal, inquiry; that we recognize violence against indigenous women and girls must be the central focus of the inquiry; that it acknowledge the national inquiry should feature and its findings be informed by an analysis of closed, not investigated and/or partially investigated cases; that we support the meaningful participation of indigenous women and those who work with and advocate for the women; that it provides for effective supports to ensure that each family has the opportunity to participate in the inquiry; that it ensures the national inquiry is focused on systemic causes of discrimination rooted in Canadian institutions and government practices and policies, while taking into account social and economic factors that put indigenous women and girls at greater risk such as poverty, inadequate housing, over criminalization, inadequate access to detox and addiction treatment programs, failure to the child welfare system, and the systematic de-funding of women and indigenous women's organizations and leadership—

The Budget

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order, please. I am sorry there is just not enough time to read everything into the record and we only have a very limited time for the question.

The hon. Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs.

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for her ongoing leadership on the issue of violence against women, particularly in the very difficult downtown eastside of Vancouver. The work that the coalition has done is truly important. I am pleased to report that all the provinces and territories have agreed to participation and full co-operation, which means this can be a truly national public inquiry, not just a federal one.

All of the issues around including indigenous women, families, and their advice is very much taken to heart as we are now in the process of writing the terms of reference for the commission and being able to choose the kind of leadership for the commission that I think the member will support.

[Translation]

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a great privilege for me to address the House today. This is a precious moment because it is my opportunity to thank the people of Laval—Les Îles for trusting me to represent them here in the House of Commons. I truly appreciate it. I will do my utmost to serve the people of Laval—Les Îles, and I will do everything in my power to meet their expectations.

[English]

As I stand in the House as a proud Canadian citizen, I shall represent with dignity and honour all of my Laval—Les Îles riding constituents.

[Translation]

As we begin a new mandate and enter a new era, this budget is even more important for Canada because it puts an end to the Conservative government's regressive policies, which were rejected by a majority of Canadians.

This budget and this new government are marking a new era. This budget is in keeping with the tradition of Liberal policies that have made this country one of the greatest places to live, and for good reason. I would like to highlight what I see as the most important social measure outlined in this budget. This measure will affect many of my constituents, as well as nearly all families with children in Canada.

The Canada child benefit, or CCB, is much more generous than the Conservatives' benefit. First of all, it is tax-free. Furthermore, this money will go directly into the pockets of Canadians. Beginning in July, it will help nine out of 10 Canadian families improve the quality of life of hundreds of thousands of children in Canada.

The CCB will boost our economy by injecting \$5.4 billion a year into it, beginning this July. The multiplier effects of this spending by Canadian households will lead to job creation and sustained economic activity month after month after month.

In practical terms, this social measure will give a single mother over \$6,000 a year tax-free, or over \$500 a month. This social measure lives up to our Canadian tradition of sharing, as well as the

excellent reputation Canada enjoyed for its social measures when I first arrived in this country.

As we know, as soon as our government came to power it cut the taxes for the middle class. In fact, the second personal income tax rate, that of the middle class, dropped from 22% to 20.5%. This measure affects almost nine million taxpayers and provides a general tax reduction. Since December 2015, this measure has resulted in a net addition of \$1.4 billion a year to our Canadian economy.

These two measures alone will inject \$6.8 billion into our economy by targeting a majority of Canadians with immediate measures to give them more money. The government is using a strategy that will immediately stimulate the economy, create more jobs in the short term, and improve the quality of life for low-income Canadians.

The genius of this budget lies in the short-, medium-, and long-term measures that will restructure and kick-start our economy.

● (1650)

The Minister of Finance is making available to Canadians \$120 billion over 10 years for infrastructure projects, or nearly \$15 billion for the next five years. Beginning this year, several billions of dollars will help stimulate Quebec's economy, which has slowed. The money remained in federal coffers for too long because of a lack of projects.

I plan to work with the City of Laval so that we can quickly submit infrastructure projects that the people of Laval and their mayor, Marc Demers, want.

There are three reasons why I want to act quickly. First, the Government of Canada will finance up to 50% of Laval's priorities. Second, our water and waste water systems are a priority for both the Minister of Finance and the Laval municipal administration. Third, the Government of Canada's 50% contribution will only be available for three years. That is forcing us to act quickly.

Investments in cultural, road, and public transit infrastructure are also needed in order to improve the quality of life of my constituents in Laval. I am also thinking of such projects as the subway extension to Montmorency and the extension from Côte-Vertu to Laval, which would reduce traffic congestion and the greenhouse gas emissions associated with it.

These projects mean that my colleagues from Laval and I need to show leadership so that our region gets its fair share of the infrastructure investments promised in this budget over the next few years.

The Table régionale de concertation des aînés de Laval reminded me that Laval is one of the cities with the highest proportions of people aged 65 and over. Many of these residents have asked me to be their spokesperson. They have urgent needs, including home care services, medical services, paratransit, and income support. Many of them are in a precarious position and are also calling for affordable housing.

The Budget

I am pleased that this budget already meets some of their needs. The guaranteed income supplement will be increased to nearly \$1,000 a year for single seniors. Old age security and the guaranteed income supplement will be indexed to consumer price inflation and the cost of living. The age of eligibility for the guaranteed income supplement will be 65, contrary to the previous Conservative government's plan to increase it to 67.

Along the same lines, my government has also already announced that it will work with the provinces to improve the Canada pension plan. I hope that I will soon have the opportunity to announce more generous pensions.

• (1655)

[English]

It is clear that the Liberal government will reinforce the middle class, care about our citizens, encourage job creation and investment, protect our environment, and deliver an important infrastructure program. Most important, the Liberal government is dedicated to taking care of our vulnerable citizens.

[Translation]

I should point out that we did not forget our veterans or CBC/Radio-Canada.

In closing, on behalf of my constituents in Laval—Les Îles, I want to thank the Minister of Finance for this first budget, which was no easy task, in this challenging global context. Against difficult odds, the budget measures will help maintain or create 43,000 jobs.

This budget inspires hope for a fairer and more prosperous future. It puts Canada back on the path to growth, and I am very proud of it.

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, we agree on a number of things raised by our colleague, in particular the new child benefit. This new benefit is much more generous and is not taxable. Furthermore, it is what the Bloc was calling for during the election campaign. This is a worthwhile measure that is more focused.

However, we do not agree on the tax cut he mentioned. Other measures would have been much more useful to the general public in terms of combatting poverty and helping the middle class. For example, in Quebec, 5.2% of taxpayers earn more than \$100,000 and 74% earn less than \$50,000. This tax cut will not affect them at all. I suggest that the government look at increasing the refundable GST tax credit. This way, 80% of the families earning between \$36,000 and \$62,000 a year would be better off.

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her wonderful question. There is at least one member on the other side who supports a number of our measures. I am pleased to hear that.

On October 19, 2015, Canadians gave our government a clear mandate to make investments and lower taxes for the middle class. Nine million families will benefit from this measure. The Government of Canada is working to lift hundreds of thousands of children out of poverty. That is the mandate we were given, and that is exactly what our government will continue to do.

• (1700)

[English]

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Madam Speaker, over the course of the campaign, we heard the Liberal leader, and now our Prime Minister, talk about the Liberal plan. Would the member not agree with us that the Liberals campaigned on a string of broken promises? How hard is it for them to look Canadians in the eyes today and say that they made a mistake, that they really did not have a plan?

Did the Liberals mislead Canadians in their campaign plan?

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury: Madam Speaker, we did not break our promise. If members look attentively at this budget, they would be happy, because more Canadians are happy. After consulting with our citizens from coast to coast, business people, and chambers of commerce, our Minister of Finance came up with a budget that would meet the needs of most Canadians.

We are proud of our Minister of Finance. We are also proud of this government and the greatest budget in the history of Canada.

[Translation]

Mr. Marco Mendicino (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened carefully to my colleague's speech, but I heard nothing about the unemployed.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Laval—Les Îles, for a short answer, please.

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. I did not talk about the unemployed because I ran out of time. The budget has a number of measures to help the unemployed, whether they are in Alberta or in eastern Canada. Workers who have lost their jobs in some regions, including Alberta, as a result of the drop in oil prices will receive five additional weeks of benefits. People who become—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am sorry, I said a short answer. We are out of time and must resume debate.

[English]

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, I wish to advise the House that I will be splitting my time with the member for Perth—Wellington.

With the cameras rolling on the campaign trail, the Liberals promised they would provide revenue-neutral tax relief for the middle class by asking wealthy Canadians to pay more. We now know that this is not the case as taxpayers will have to dish out an additional \$8.9 billion over the next six years, and hard-working middle-class Canadians will ultimately have to shoulder this massive burden.

The Budget

The Liberals promised Canadians they would not run deficits of more than \$10 billion a year, but now we see that they are borrowing almost \$30 billion in 2016 and upwards of \$120 billion over the next five years.

The Liberals promised to spend \$10 billion per year on infrastructure, but if we add it up, infrastructure spending in this budget is far less than what they told Canadians in order to get elected.

The Liberals promised small business they would honour graduated tax relief previously passed in Parliament, but that promise has also been thrown out the window.

With no plan to return to balance, this budget simply increases the cost of government, does nothing to create jobs, and it is on track to make the employment insurance system the largest employer in Canada.

This is not what Canadians were told when they were being asked for their vote last October. Instead, Canadians were sold a bill of goods and, simply put, this budget was not as advertised. However, do not take my word for it. Many prominent Canadians in the know who are echoing these sentiments are also echoing their disappointment.

Kevin Page, the former parliamentary budget officer whom many members across the aisle quoted in the House on almost a daily basis when they sat in opposition, said, “Budgets are fiscal plans. A fiscal plan without a strategy to get back to balance and without sustainability analysis is not responsible or prudent. We are passing higher debt onto future generations”, he concluded.

A *Globe and Mail* editorial noted:

The Liberal Party’s electoral pitch was that Ottawa would run deficits to pay for infrastructure. But that’s mostly not what’s happening in Budget 2016. The vast majority of the planned new spending is not investment. It’s not building roads or bridges or public transit. It’s ongoing program spending, locked-in and permanent.

Canadian Federation of Independent Business president, Dan Kelly, said “In its platform, in a written letter to CFIB members, and in campaign stops across the country, the new government promised to reduce the small business corporate tax rate to nine per cent by 2019. That promise was broken today as it announced the rate will remain at 10.5 per cent after 2016. This decision will cost small firms over \$900 million more per year as of 2019.”

Sadly, respected journalist Andrew Coyne who, for the record, publicly endorsed the Liberals led by Michael Ignatieff in 2011, probably put it best when he wrote that this budget “is one from the 1970s, to address problems of 1980s”.

This budget would hurt small business, offers nothing for Barrie manufacturers, and has no mention of the continued cleanup of Lake Simcoe. It also fails to offer any support for our agricultural producers in Innisfil, despite the agri-food sector and families that work on those farms, accounting for more than \$100 billion in economic activity and employing more than two million Canadians. After being promised a tax cut and making plans based on that pledge, small and medium-sized businesses across my riding will not see that relief from the government in the foreseeable future.

I watched CTV’s *Question Period* two weeks ago following the budget, and the comments made by the Minister of Small Business and Tourism were quite interesting to say the least. The interviewer questioned the minister on how much savings the treasury would realize by deferring the tax relief for SMEs earning less than \$500,000. She did not answer the question and, quite frankly, I do not think she knew the answer to the question. As the host pressed the minister on why the government was deferring the tax cuts that were promised to small business owners in her very own mandate letter, she said, “I wouldn’t say that it is being deferred”.

The budget makes it very clear in a statement regarding the about-face by the Liberals. It is right there in black and white on page 220 for all to see. It reads, “Budget 2016 proposes that further reductions in the small business income tax rate be deferred”. It is clear the minister had not read the text but in hindsight this surprise in the Liberals’ own budget should not shock anyone.

● (1705)

The Prime Minister himself makes no bones about his dim views on small business, the very sector that is universally held as the backbone of our economy, the one that employs roughly two-thirds of all working Canadians. His perception of small business was particularly revealing during his pre-election interview with Peter Mansbridge when he declared a large percentage of small businesses were just ways for wealthier Canadians to save on their taxes.

However, this is not the story that I hear from hard-working constituents operating small business and farms in my riding. They are not wealthy Canadians trying to avoid taxes. Cancelling the promised tax rate cut or not renewing the tax credit for EI premiums paid for hiring youth in the first year hurts their bottom line.

What am I to tell these people and so many other business owners across Barrie—Innisfil? Have they been forgotten? Are they being taken for granted? Or is it both?

On infrastructure, the Liberal infrastructure plan in the days and months leading up to the October 19 vote was also not as advertised in this budget. Most Canadians see infrastructure as building roads and bridges. They think of things that reduce gridlock and make it easier to get our products to market, and easier to get people where they need to go.

During the campaign, the Prime Minister announced with fanfare and fervour that his infrastructure plan would kick start the economy and create jobs for Canadians. The airwaves were bombarded with TV commercials, and countless photo ops were staged showing the Prime Minister with seemingly every backhoe, every dump truck and every heavy crane from St. John’s to Victoria.

However, what was advertised and what is in this budget outline two very different things. I believe a recent editorial in *The Globe and Mail* captured this sleight of hand, this shell game, quite succinctly. It read:

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What the budget calls “Phase I of Canada’s New Infrastructure Plan” involves \$11.9-billion in new infrastructure investments – spread over five years. In a big-budget bucket, it’s a relatively small drop. The remaining infrastructure spending, which, based on previous Liberal promises, should involve another \$48-billion over the next 10 years, is nowhere to be seen.

Infrastructure, to the Liberals, is divided into three main project pots: transit, green, and what they refer to as social infrastructure. For transit, the budget allocates \$3.4 billion over three years but just \$852 million for 2016-17. Their green infrastructure fund accounts for \$5 billion over five years but only \$650 million is to be spent this year. The Liberals also claim they will spend \$3.4 billion on social infrastructure over the next five years. That is a far cry from \$10 billion a year pledged to “kick start the economy” while the Liberals were stumping for votes.

Listening to the Minister of Finance in the House on March 22, I was struck by a sense of déjà vu, hearing a similar tone and common language from a budget speech delivered at Queen’s Park five weeks earlier by Ontario’s finance minister, Charles Sousa.

In spite of the finance ministers using over 9,000 combined words to unveil their respective budgets, the term auto industry was not mentioned in either speech. Mr. Sousa failed to make any reference to farming, and Canada’s Minister of Finance only referenced farming once, but it was not in the context of growing crops or raising livestock. Instead he seemed to suggest that farmers transition their operations to become wind and solar power producers.

The term ‘small business’ was virtually non-existent in either remarks. The word “employers” did not make Canada’s Minister of Finance’s final speech cut. Mr. Sousa’s lone reference to the word “employers” was a note that the Liberals were implementing ORPP in Ontario.

Neither speech recognized the oil industry, and manufacturing was, at best, a second thought.

Budget 2016 also abandons our military by deferring \$3.7 billion in spending that was set to take place over the next five years. This past weekend, I was at the Vimy ceremony at Base Borden commemorating the 99th anniversary of that historic battle when Canadian soldiers, heroes of our great nation, fought together forming Canada into a nation from a colony.

There is concern from those who serve proudly today that we are returning to the shameful decade of darkness the military suffered under the Liberals during the 1990s.

In closing, I would like to quote former finance minister Jim Flaherty in his budget speech delivered to the House in 2014. He had a warning for Canadians, and I believe his words are very appropriate today. He said:

When governments run prolonged deficits, they are spending money that belongs to future generations. Deficit spending endangers social programs we benefit from and that our children will soon depend on.

● (1710)

Today’s deficits are tomorrow’s taxes, and the budget presented by the government points to a future wherein our kids and grandkids will spend their lives paying for the past.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Conservative member rambled on about the

deficit as if his party has any expertise on the topic of solving the problem.

The deficit exists. It exists in the budget or it exists in the infrastructure that brings our country together. The deficit is there.

The Conservatives managed to score a twofer, ensuring that not only would the deficit add up to somewhere around \$150 billion newly borrowed dollars, but that the infrastructure deficit—which includes the social infrastructure deficit, the road infrastructure deficit, the transit infrastructure deficit, the first nations infrastructure deficit, the digital infrastructure deficit, the rural infrastructure deficit, the educational infrastructure deficit—would also be left in place while growing the fiscal deficit without anything to show for it.

The deficit exists, no matter what. We can let the infrastructure deficit fester or we can invest in our future. I choose investment.

● (1715)

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Speaker, I am not sure there was a question there, but I will show the member the due respect that should be shown in the House for each individual member and not ramble on with my answer.

However, I will say that what Canadians voted for was not the plan that the Liberals are putting forward. The Liberals have put forward a \$10 billion plan. Granted, that was their plan and it was not the Conservative plan, but they exceeded that by almost three times. I would suggest that what the Liberals propose is not what was sold to Canadians, as I said in my statement.

The other thing I would suggest, which I know Liberals want to deny, is that clearly the independent finance department shows that there was a surplus—a surplus—in the month of January of close to \$4.3 billion. They continue to deny this. The fact is that they have taken that surplus and have now made it vanish. That is the unfortunate reality, and those are the terms that the Liberals will have to come to live by.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak and I thank my colleague for his presentation.

Obviously, all members of Parliament are here to represent their ridings and they face issues specific to each constituency. In Longueuil, for example, everyone was of course very disappointed that there was nothing for the aerospace sector. Small businesses were even more disappointed, since they are part of the important industrial clusters that support our large industries. Similarly, my colleague talked about problems in the automotive sector and in agriculture.

Can we not agree that the Liberals’ main theme during the election campaign was the middle class, in the broadest sense of the term?

Would my colleague agree that, basically, if this is brought in before Christmas to ensure tax refunds for the middle class, but people who earn less than \$45,000 are not affected, that is a mistake?

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[English]

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Speaker, I wish I was at a point where I could answer in French. I am working very hard on it and will get to that point, but I will answer in English.

The question that the hon. member asked is an important one. What we have seen with this so-called middle-class tax break is a real shell game. The hon. member talks about the \$40,000 range. In fact, there is evidence to suggest that the ones who will benefit the most from the middle-class tax break are actually upper-middle-class Canadians. In my response to the middle-class tax break, I used a figure from the Centre for Policy Alternatives that showed that members of Parliament actually receive more of a tax break, a more significant amount of money, than those making \$40,000, so it is, in fact, a shell game.

Liberals are talking about the middle-class tax cuts but are taking away programs such as the children's fitness tax credit and the arts tax credit. Canadians have been benefiting from those tax credits to the tune of \$1.9 billion. It is the same thing with income splitting for families, something that I was able to take advantage of. Canadians have benefited from that tax break in the amount of \$1.9 billion.

What the Liberals are giving, the Liberals are taking away. What the Liberals are taking away and adding more onto are what our kids and grandkids, middle-class Canadians, will be paying for going forward in the long term.

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise in the House today to participate in the debate on the first budget of the 42nd Parliament. However, I stand here disappointed with the budget that the Liberal government has decided to present. Not only is the budget out of balance, but it is out of touch with the people of Perth—Wellington and the people of Canada.

In fact, earlier this winter I undertook pre-budget consultations with key stakeholder groups in my riding. I reached out to economic and business organizations, charities, service clubs, and municipal officials in all 11 municipalities in my riding of Perth—Wellington. I carefully reviewed their feedback, and a number of common themes emerged right off the bat. I forwarded those concerns to the hon. Minister of Finance. Unfortunately, the concerns of my constituents and the communities in my riding are not reflected in this Liberal budget.

In the responses I received, there was a key theme. The people of Perth—Wellington expected their government to operate within its own means. They did not want to see runaway spending and they did not want to see spending for the sake of spending, yet today we see massive deficits and a long-term plan that does not include returning to balanced budgets.

In fact, in this year alone, \$30 billion of new deficit spending is occurring, and it will be \$113 billion over the next five years. Rather than choosing to pay down the national debt, the Liberals are mortgaging Canadians for generations to come.

It is one thing for the Liberals to deny the fact that they were left with a surplus, but it is quite another thing for them to break their own promise and create deficits three times larger than they clearly promised in the election campaign.

The current government says time and time again that because interest rates are low, now is the time to spend, but what the Liberals fail to realize is that it is possible to invest without spending into unnecessary deficits. Wise spending means making targeted investments to bring about long-term economic growth, as our government did over the past decade; in fact, since the depths of the global economic recession, under the leadership of our former Conservative government we saw the private sector create nearly 1.3 million net new jobs, the largest per capita job creation in the G7. However, now the current Liberal government is spending for the sake of spending rather than to stimulate the economy.

Simply put, we cannot invest in the needs and priorities of Canadians by saddling them with future debt from the reckless spending of the current Liberal government.

● (1720)

[Translation]

I am troubled by the fact that the budget includes a number of commitments that are lacking in detail. The budget does not say how much the Prime Minister's youth council will cost, how much it will cost to implement the proposed changes, or how much the government will spend to study flexible work arrangements for workers in federally regulated sectors. The government should be more forthcoming with its estimates for these things.

It goes without saying that the energy sector is struggling right now. Under the circumstances, a responsible government should have a plan to support this crucial sector and the millions of Canadians who depend on it. The government has not come forward with any such plan, and there is nothing in the budget to drive investment.

We have all seen the statistics and the reports on layoffs in western Canada's oil sector. Several MPs have talked about this issue in detail. I would remind all hon. members that the decline of the energy sector has a negative impact on other sectors of our economy. Businesses across the country are losing clients and consumers tied to the energy sector. Now those businesses, including some in Perth—Wellington, are laying people off too.

The government failed to set a budget that will grow the economy and create good, high-paying jobs in the private sector. If the Liberal government had a sensible plan to support small businesses, it would have invested in programs and initiatives that have proven to be successful over the past decade. It would have invested in the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario or committed to maintaining the hiring credit for small business.

Instead, it chose to bring down a budget that cancels useful tax credits and cuts effective federal investments.

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[English]

Another way to help small business thrive is to cut red tape. I hear this time and time again as I speak with local businesses in my riding of Perth—Wellington. In fact, just last week I spoke with the owner of a food processing facility in my riding in the town of St. Marys. This local facility has enjoyed great success commercially across this country and its products are now on the shelves at Costco and supermarkets across this great country. He had an interesting statistic for me. He told me that in the past year he has had more government auditors, inspectors, and government employees go through his plant than he has employees.

If we want to help small businesses, we need to address the burdensome regulation that they face, not add to it. What is more, the Liberal government has already broken its promise to small businesses. The president of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business said that the promise related to lowering the income tax rate

...was broken in today's budget, as [it was announced] the rate will remain at 10.5% after 2016. This is expected to cost small firms over \$900 million more per year by 2019.

In my riding of Perth—Wellington, agriculture is the main economic driver. In fact, it is one of the largest industries in Canada. In Perth—Wellington it is a multi-billion dollar industry. Perth—Wellington has more dairy farmers than any other riding in the country. Wellington County has more chicken farmers than any other county in Ontario. Our pork and beef farmers are second to none, and since Perth—Wellington has some of the most fertile farmland in the country, our grain farmers are second to none.

The farmers in my riding are disappointed with the Liberal government. Not only was agriculture completely left out of the Speech from the Throne, but in the entire 269-page budget document, agriculture enjoyed two pages. The first page was simply reaffirming Growing Forward 2, which our former Conservative government helped to implement with the support of the provinces, and the second page was simply referring to genomics projects undertaken in Ottawa. There was no support for Canadian farmers or Canadian farm families. The backbone of our rural economy was completely left out in the cold by the Liberal government. If the Liberal government wants to completely ignore our rural communities and our farmers, it should simply say so.

Another thing I want to touch on very briefly is the idea of rural infrastructure. It is disappointing that despite all the promises that were made during the election campaign, there is very little new money for the traditional infrastructure of rural communities, such as roads and bridges.

In fact, Perth—Wellington has a number of significant infrastructure needs as they relate to roads and bridges. As a former municipal councillor myself, I saw that need first-hand and saw the challenges faced by provinces such as Ontario when we put undue regulations and restrictions on the funding of rural infrastructure projects. We need to allow municipalities more flexibility in choosing priorities that they see fit and work with them from that measure.

Finally, I want to address briefly the idea of skills and the need to invest in skills in a well-trained economy.

In my riding of Perth—Wellington we have a skills shortage. We have a labour shortage. We actually need more people to fill the needs of certain skilled trades and unskilled trades in my riding of Perth—Wellington, yet the budget does not address many rural concerns, such as transportation options in communities or targeted investments in skills training, such as apprenticeship loans and the Canada job grant. As well, the hiring credits that the Liberal government cancelled will do nothing to help these small businesses continue to function.

On behalf of the people of Perth—Wellington, I will be unable to support the budget. It simply does not support or even respect our rural communities, our manufacturers, our tradespeople, our farmers and farm families, or the hard-working families who struggle to make ends meet on a weekly basis.

I will be voting against the budget.

● (1725)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Intergovernmental Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to my colleague across the way.

I wonder if he would like to comment on a report that has been waved quite often today in the House of Commons. It is the Department of Finance report that was released from the “Fiscal Monitor” in January 2016. Would he care to comment on this paragraph?

There can be significant volatility in monthly results due to the timing of revenue receipts and expense recognition. For instance, a large share of government spending is typically reported in the March Fiscal Monitor. For fiscal year 2015-16, while a surplus is expected for February, Budget 2016 projects that the cumulative budgetary balance will deteriorate to reach a year-end deficit of \$5.4 billion.

In light of the fact that the Conservative government was the architect of this fiscal year, in light of the fact that the Conservatives never balanced the budget, not once in the last 10 years, is the member opposite prepared to resign from his party and join our side, a party that has balanced the budget?

● (1730)

Mr. John Nater: Mr. Speaker, certainly not. I am proud to be part of the party of the late Jim Flaherty, who had some wise and sage advice when he advised government that simply because there is a surplus does not mean that we should spend it.

Since the hon. member for Spadina—Fort York wants to quote the *Fiscal Monitor*, let me quote another paragraph from it. It states “the Government posted a budgetary surplus of \$4.3 billion, compared to a surplus of \$1.3 billion” in the previous fiscal year.

What is even more galling is that the government does not even have a plan to return to balanced budgets. It has five years of runaway budget deficits with no planned return to balance. When we went into deficit in the worst economic downturn of a generation, we had a plan, and we returned to surplus a year ahead of schedule.

An hon. member: You never did it.

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The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I want to remind hon. members that they do have times to speak, and screaming across is not really going to help anyone.

The hon. member for Hochelaga.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be very respectful.

The Conservatives and the NDP made a list of the many promises that were broken in this budget. These are things that were promised during the election campaign and that are nowhere to be seen in the budget.

What does my colleague think about the Liberals promising, hands on their hearts, to restore home mail delivery, but failing to do so?

Mr. John Nater: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the question.

During the election campaign, I went to homes in every corner of Perth—Wellington. In Perth—Wellington, some homes have home mail delivery and others have Canada Post community mailboxes.

[*English*]

In Perth—Wellington, we have both types of delivery. I personally have never had home delivery in my community. We have had community mailboxes or a post office box. In the community of Stratford, we have heard some concerns about the movement to community mailboxes, since it has never had these before.

It is important that Canada Post address these concerns. Whether we can say as a blanket statement that it should return to home delivery, I do not think that is wise, especially since Canada Post is an arm's-length crown corporation and should be dealt with as such. It should be making the decision in the best interests of all Canadians, not something that is going to tax them unduly going forward.

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have been here throughout the debate today, and I have heard a lot from the other side about how they have not forgotten their pet projects in the budget. Well, the budget has forgotten the agricultural sector, the oil industry, the energy sector, and small business.

I am wondering if the member would be prepared to expand on those and how they might interrelate.

Mr. John Nater: Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to see the sectors that the Liberal government has chosen to leave out of the budget. Whether it is the oil and gas sector or the agricultural industry, it is simply unacceptable. These important industries form the backbone of our rural economy, though in many Conservative-held ridings, mind. It seems that the Liberal government has been focusing on its pet projects rather than on the needs of all Canadians. When we look at agriculture in particular, which I am acutely aware of, it has left it out to dry.

However, there is one thing that the Liberal government could do that would assist the agriculture industry and would assist it quickly. That would be to ratify the trans-Pacific partnership. The Liberals

can go on all they like about consultations, but at the end of the day, the Canadian public supports the TPP, agriculture supports the TPP, and they should get on with ratifying it.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague, the member for Mississauga East—Cooksville.

It is with great pleasure that I stand once again in this venerable House to speak in favour of the budget that our Liberal government introduced last month. As the proud member of Parliament for Davenport, I was pleased to read through the entire budget and to appreciate how it would help the residents in my riding.

This is a good budget. It fulfills many of the promises we made during the election last year. This budget is about strengthening our middle class, supporting our children, seniors and families, investing in our economy by building a more innovative Canada, crafting an environmentally sustainable nation, and creating a more inclusive and fair country.

There are also a lot of other gold nuggets in the budget that are wonderful, and I will be highlighting them during the short time I have here this afternoon.

Let me begin with what I call the heart and soul of the budget, the Canada child benefit. The families of Davenport have told me time and time again that the current cost of living is very expensive and costs never seemed to stop increasing, that child care costs are too high, and that they are hard pressed to save for their futures. In addition, too many of our children, not only in Davenport but across the Canada, live in poverty and this is unacceptable.

This government made a firm commitment to grow the middle class and to help support them. Therefore, we introduced the Canada child benefit. It is the most significant social policy innovation in a generation. The Canada child benefit will be a simpler, tax-free, better targeted and more generous way to support Canadian families. It will replace many of the small benefits and credits that currently exist and ultimately provide more support to families. Indeed, nine out of ten families will receive more in child benefits under the current system. It is set up to provide help to those who need it the most. This is the fundamental principle behind this program and an important one for our government.

All families with a combined net income of \$150,000 or less will end up with more money in their pockets than under the previous program. The benefit takes into account the overall family income and is reduced progressively as the combined family income goes up. Families with less than \$30,000 in net income will receive the maximum benefit, 300,000 children will be lifted out of poverty, and the new benefit will come into effect in July of this year.

The budget contains many other significant programs that will support the middle class. I am only going to run through three of them because I think they are important to mention.

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We are doubling the number of student jobs so we can give our youth the work experience they so want and need. That is in addition to the increase in co-ops and work placements. We are providing significantly more support for students who want to attend post-secondary universities because we know we cannot compete in the global economy of the 21st century if we do not have a high level of knowledge and skills. Finally, we are enhancing investments in skills, retraining, and apprenticeships for those who want to qualify or transition into better-paying jobs.

There are many in my riding of Davenport who want better-paying jobs, who want to transition from their current job to another one that gives them and their families a better future.

We in Davenport are also so excited about the infrastructure investment that is contained in budget 2016. Davenport is an urban riding. We depend on transit and increasingly on bike infrastructure to help us get around. We need more transit, more affordable transit, more dependable transit, and we need it now. Therefore, the \$3.4 billion over three years to upgrade and improve public transit will go a long way to moving people more effectively. In addition, we are building the solid transit infrastructure that Toronto needs for a prosperous 21st century economy.

I would be remiss if I did not mention that we in Davenport are also very excited to see the federal government back at the table playing a significant role in affordable housing. Budget 2016 will invest \$2.3 billion over two years to give Canadians greater access to more affordable housing. Most of this money is going to the provinces and municipalities to be allocated by them. They know where the need is the greatest. One of our city councillors, Ana Bailão, the head of affordable housing efforts in the city, is delighted to see this investment. It is a long time coming and it will make a difference.

I do not want our seniors to think that we have forgotten them with respect to housing. We have not. We know that many in our aging population are finding it difficult to continue to maintain and live in their homes and they are looking for affordable alternatives in their communities. The budget provides over \$200 million over two years to support the construction, repair, and adaptation of affordable housing for seniors. All these dollars will not be required to be cost matched and will help thousands and thousands of seniors live in affordable homes across Canada.

• (1735)

In total, our Liberal government will almost double the current level of infrastructure investment over 10 years. This is a bold, significant commitment, and a necessary one. This historic infrastructure investment is meant to immediately create more jobs and better-paying jobs. It is meant to create some of the much-needed infrastructure that will not only serve our current population but will also create the foundation from which to build a future prosperous economy. It influences the short term but sets us up for the long term. I laud and applaud our courage in making these investments.

When I talk of our future, my mind also turns to the environment. For 10 years, the previous administration took no leadership on the environment. We wasted precious time, and this budget aims to make up for lost time. I do not have time to go through all of the

amazing green items we have in the budget. However, I am proud of our ambition and our immediate torpedo-like action.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, and Catherine McKenna, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, are working hard with the provinces, territories, and aboriginal leaders to create a pan-Canadian framework on clean growth and climate change. Budget 2016 has allocated \$2 billion over two years, beginning in 2017-18, to establish a low carbon economy fund. The budget has also allocated significant dollars for green infrastructure, clean technology, and numerous programs that impact transportation, renewable energy, pollution, water, ecosystems, and parks. All of that will lead to a cleaner and more sustainable environment for all Canadians.

We in Davenport are long-time environmentalists, since the days of former long-time Liberal member of Parliament, Charles Caccia, the first MP to put the environment on the table at the federal level. We are delighted at the serious focus and the remarkable investment on the environment. Our government knows that we have to lead on preparing for climate change to create a sustainable environment, and to move to a low carbon future in order to take care of Canada's ecosystems, biodiversity, water, air, and our future.

My time is coming to an end, so I would like to quickly list a few more gold nuggets in the budget that we in Davenport are proud of and that are important to mention.

The first is the investment into arts and culture. There are many talented artists in my riding. We are overjoyed at the \$1.9 billion investment over five years to support the CBC, the Canada Council for the Arts, Telefilm Canada, the National Film Board of Canada, and many other institutions. It is said that artists show us the soul of the nation through their work. I, for one, want us to do all that we can to support them.

We in Davenport are also proud of our commitment to Canada's indigenous people. Budget 2016 commits \$8.4 billion over five years for education, so that we can finally spend the same amount of money on an aboriginal child as we do on the rest of Canadian children. There will also be \$8.4 billion allocated to build first nations' schools, and invest in desperately needed clean water infrastructure to finally end on reserve boil water advisories. As a nation, we have taken too long to right the wrongs of our past treatment of first nations. I am proud of the commitment we made in this budget to forge a new relationship and to ensure that first nations too will share in the future prosperity of Canada.

I have two other quick things to mention.

The Budget

Immigration is the number one issue, for me, in my community. I know it is the same for most ridings across this country. We are spending \$25 million to support faster, more predictable processing times for family sponsorship, and \$56 million over three years for processing times of new permanent residents and increased settlement programming.

Also close to my heart is the investment for women and families who are experiencing domestic violence. This will mean \$90 million over two years for the construction and renovation of shelters and transition houses for victims of family violence.

I will end by recognizing that budget 2016 can at times sound like all we are doing is spending. However, this budget is about investing, and we are making our investments responsibly: a \$30-billion deficit in a \$2-trillion economy. We have low interest rates and we have the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio of all G7 countries. If there is a time to invest, it is now, and we are doing so both boldly and responsibly.

Budget 2016 illustrates that this government is proudly stepping up to the plate with a bold vision and plan for Canada moving forward. Canadians deserve no less from their government and their political leaders.

• (1740)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Before we proceed, I want to remind hon. members that we do not refer to members in the House, whether it be the Prime Minister or any of the ministers, by their name, but only by their title or riding.

In any case, we will continue with questions and comments. The hon. member for Kitchener—Conestoga.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for her comments about the budget. Certainly, she articulated many of the expenditures and she did say something like it might seem like spending. Well, it is actually spending. It is really a poor investment.

Here are some of the promises the Liberals made that were definitely broken.

There was reducing the small business tax. We have heard from many small businesses and from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business that this has been a huge disappointment for our small business community.

There was running a deficit of no more than \$10 billion. A \$30 billion deficit in the first year of this budget is really quite crippling to our economy.

Finally, there was a clear commitment to immediately invest \$3 billion over the next four years to deliver more and better home care services for all Canadians. This includes more access to high-quality in-home caregivers, financial supports for family care, and when necessary, palliative care. There was nothing in the budget that dealt with this \$3 billion commitment. Therefore, either it is not going to be funded or it simply needs to be added to the existing \$10 billion deficit. I would like to ask my colleague which it is.

• (1745)

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Mr. Speaker, we are indeed investing in our economy, investing in today and investing in tomorrow.

In terms of the small business tax, we believe that the investment we are making in terms of the cut to the middle-class taxes and in the Canada child benefit will also benefit our small business owners right across the country. We also believe that our innovation plan and investment in infrastructure will also benefit small businesses across the country. A better economy is good for all of our businesses, small and big.

In terms of home care, it is one of my key concerns as well, because I talked a lot about that during the election campaign last year. I have spoken to our Minister of Health and she has said that, indeed, it is still a very strong commitment and promise of our government. Right now, she is consulting with provincial and territorial leaders across the country. It is something they are working on as we speak.

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for her passionate speech. It was very well done.

I would like to ask my colleague from Davenport about the Liberal promises made to seniors at election time.

We in the NDP welcome the commitment to return the age of eligibility to 65 for old age security and for the guaranteed income supplement. We also welcome the Liberals' commitment to increase the guaranteed income supplement for all seniors.

The Liberals campaigned on promises to boost the guaranteed income supplement for low-income seniors immediately. That was the promise: immediately. They would also index the OAS and the GIS benefits to a new seniors price index.

Can I ask why seniors are now waiting until July, nine months after the election, for an increase to the GIS, and why the budget fails to mention the indexing of the benefits?

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Mr. Speaker, I believe we have taken immediate action on the guaranteed income supplement. It is currently in the budget. We are moving as quickly as possible. We have introduced it, and we are trying to move it through the House as quickly as possible. When it actually reaches our seniors, it is about as immediate and as quick as possible.

I would also like to say that I have so many wonderful seniors in my riding, and my heart goes out to them. I talk a lot to them about how we also have dollars in our budget for affordable housing for our seniors. We are continuing to work on our health care system, because that will also benefit them.

There are a lot of wonderful things in our budget that are going to help our seniors in Canada today. I know that, in the years and months to come, we will be doing more things that will continue to help our seniors, moving forward.

The Budget

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East—Cooksville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am profoundly honoured and grateful for this opportunity to speak to this transformational budget 2016. Budget 2016 puts people first and delivers the help that Canadians need now, not a decade from now. It is an essential step to restoring prosperity for the middle class.

I was glad to hear that our Prime Minister has made it clear that our number one job as members of Parliament, in his words, “is to be a strong voice in the service of the people who sent [us] here from [our] constituencies.” I could not agree more. This is why my Mississauga colleagues and I conducted extensive pre-budget consultations and meetings with constituents and stakeholders. They were loud and clear about needs that needed to be addressed: investments in infrastructure, opportunity and jobs for our young people, providing supports for our seniors and veterans so they can live with dignity and respect, and building a creative and innovative economy to best compete in the 21st century. The minister heard our voices, and the budget reflected what the people of Mississauga were looking for.

We conducted a post-budget meeting just this past week. The sentiments from the private sector, the City of Mississauga, the not-for-profit sector, our university, our college, were all extremely positive.

My greatest thanks and gratitude will always go to the voters of Mississauga East—Cooksville. I have committed to serve them to the best of my ability, with integrity, humility, and hard work, and to deliver on the commitments that I and our party made throughout the election. I am so proud to represent the kind and wonderful people of my riding and I am proud that budget 2016 delivers for them by investing in their sons and daughters, mothers and fathers, and grandparents.

My constituency has a rich history. We owe a debt of gratitude to the Mississauga First Nation which first settled these lands. Mississauga was formed on August 2, 1805, when officials purchased 84,000 acres of land from the Mississauga. The crown gave much of that land to our first immigrants, the United Empire Loyalists, who fled from the Thirteen Colonies during and after the American Revolution.

I am proud that budget 2016 is addressing generations of injustices by providing a better quality of life for our indigenous peoples and building a stronger, more unified, and prosperous Canada.

Today Mississauga has grown to become Canada's sixth-largest city, with the same challenges and opportunities of any large urban centre. More than 750,000 people call Mississauga home. These are people from all parts of the world, from every faith, and that number is growing. We are a shining example of the diversity that makes our country strong and unique. This growth has come from waves of new Canadians of Portuguese, British, Polish, Filipino, Italian, black, Chinese, South Asian, and Ukrainian descent, people from every other country and region around the world, to make up our colourful and cultural mosaic.

I am proud that our government is committed to bringing in over 300,000 new Canadians for this year.

Mississauga East—Cooksville is my home. It is where my wife Christine and I raise our family. I am a father of two amazing 10-year-old twin boys, Sebastien and Alexander, and like any parent, I want the best for them. They remain at the heart of my desire to serve here. I am proud of our government's belief that every child deserves an opportunity to realize their full potential.

Our new Canada child benefit will lift 300,000 kids out of poverty. It will be simpler, tax-free, more generous, and better targeted. About nine out of 10 families will receive higher benefits under this new system, and hundreds of thousands of children will have a better opportunity to succeed.

Youth will also have more opportunity to go to college and university and begin their career path.

Budget 2016 reflects our values of inclusiveness and fairness.

● (1750)

My family's story reflects the story of Canada, one of diversity, hope, and hard work. In 1967, my father left Portugal. He fled a fascist, dictatorial regime because he wanted his family to be free and to find a better life. He came here seeking a better life and he never looked back. He then sponsored my mom, Maria, and me to join him. At that time, spousal sponsorship and family reunification was taking less than six months. My family is proud of its Portuguese heritage, and we love Canada.

I am proud that this budget is committed to lowering those times for spousal sponsorship and family reunification. It has been atrocious to hear from my constituents that they have been waiting for their spouses for two, three, and four years. They are waiting for family members for four years. This is tearing families apart, and we are going to address this now.

I am fortunate that my parents chose Canada and I am grateful that Canada accepted us. My father's deep desire for social justice, freedom, and democracy today formed the basis of my political engagement. His love and passion for Canada was never stronger than when he watched Canada on the world stage as a peacekeeper, a builder of the world's tallest tower, or the winner of the 1972 series. This budget allocates \$586.5 million over the next three years for peacekeeping and security.

My dad was patriotic to the core. After watching Nancy Greene win the gold for Canada in the 1968 Olympics, he named my sister Nancy.

We Canadians welcome refugees. We Canadians believe we need to tackle climate change. We Canadians are honest brokers and consensus builders on the world stage, with our greatest trading partner and friend, the United States. When we work together to accomplish shared goals, we are unstoppable. Budget 2016 would get us back on track to a brighter future for all.

The Budget

Like training for the Olympics, in which I had an opportunity to participate and proudly wear the Canadian maple leaf, this budget was built by planning, preparing, and building partnerships. Our government has an ambitious agenda for making real change happen. Budget 2016 is a bold move to growing the middle class, and it takes giant steps to revitalize our Canadian economy. We are stronger together, and that is why we are delivering on our agenda in a collaborative and respectful way with our municipal, provincial, territorial, and indigenous partners.

I look forward to serving and working in the same respectful and collaborative way here in the House with all members, on both sides of the aisle, as we strive to do the best we can for the people of Canada. Our government has Olympic-like ambition. There is \$120 billion to be invested in infrastructure: green infrastructure, social infrastructure, transit infrastructure.

I want to share a quick story. On July 8, 2013, my riding of Mississauga East—Cooksville was hit by the biggest flood it has ever experienced. It is the worst natural disaster in Ontario's history, costing \$1 billion. Budget 2016 addresses the need for major infrastructure investments, flood mitigation, clean technology, and addressing climate change. Many families in my riding will be very delighted with this.

There is also the issue of affordable housing. The wait list right now in my area runs from 12 years to 21 years. Affordable housing is being addressed in this budget. These are the needs of my community, and this budget addresses those needs. I am pleased to support budget 2016.

• (1755)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is actually money for affordable housing in this budget. However, one thing that concerns us is that most of those investments have to be matched by the provinces and territories.

What will happen to this budget if the provinces and territories do not have the funds to match the federal investments? Will the government simply keep the money in its coffers? What will happen to that money if it is not spent?

• (1800)

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Fonseca: Mr. Speaker, the approach of our government is very different from that of the previous government. It is one of collaboration. It is one of respect.

We understand our municipal, provincial, and indigenous partners are at the table with us. We are rolling up our sleeves and working together to make sure that we move our country forward.

This is the approach that our Prime Minister has taken. It is the approach of all of our ministers. When I say that in my words and remarks to budget 2016, it is the approach we are taking with all members of this House on both sides of the aisle.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member and I appreciate the manner in which he presents his thoughts on the budget. It was very powerful.

I look at it in terms of some of the social programs he makes reference to. In particular, could the member provide some comments in regard to the Canada child benefit program? This will in fact have a very profound impact on all Canadians, either directly or indirectly. It is a major part of the budget. Would the member like to provide his thoughts on that aspect?

Mr. Peter Fonseca: Mr. Speaker, while knocking on so many doors, I met families that want to provide those opportunities for their children to be able to achieve higher education and to be able to participate in a sport or extracurricular activities.

The average family in my riding makes about \$70,000. This budget will provide a family with two kids with about \$3,000 more tax-free per year. That will make a world of a difference. That is transformational for generations to come.

I have heard the Minister of Finance talk about the Canada child benefit. In the same way that we all embrace universal health care here in our country, this Canada child benefit will be something that will be talked about for generations to come. The impacts will be positive for our nation.

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Spadina—Fort York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the question from my colleague opposite about unspent infrastructure money, which we know is a significant problem.

For the last two years, most of the major cities in this country, Vancouver, Calgary, Regina, Winnipeg, Ottawa, Mississauga, Montreal, and Halifax, have received no dollars in new federal infrastructure commitments. The money was largely unspent. It is one of the ways in which the faux balancing process of the previous government was achieved. One-time money from the sale of GM, unspent infrastructure money, and voila, there is a balanced budget in October, but come March, it does not quite work out.

Is my colleague aware that unspent infrastructure money in this budget will be flowed directly back to municipalities through the gas tax? This is a unique achievement in so far as the money committed now must be spent. Those provinces that are not stepping up to the plate and partnering will see their cities funded instead as a result of their lack of co-operation or lack of progress on these files.

It is a unique component in infrastructure funding. It will top up the gas tax money on a one-time basis, and will really be a game changer for municipalities across this country which will no longer have money promised and not delivered, as was the previous government's practice.

Mr. Peter Fonseca: Mr. Speaker, the member has been a tremendous advocate for public transit. He is quite right. This government has made a commitment. We know how well the gas tax transfer has worked with municipalities for public transit. They all applaud this. I have spoken with our mayor, Bonnie Crombie, and members of council, and they think it is the right thing to do.

We want to make sure that all of those precious dollars go into our public transit and are invested in our communities.

The Budget

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, 10 minutes is really not enough time to respond to the budget. There are so many things to say. However, to ensure that as many members of the House as possible have the opportunity to participate in the debate and discussion, I have agreed to share my time with the member for Vancouver East.

As members know, all budgets are important, but the first budget of a new government should propose practical measures for making that government's election promises a reality.

When reading this budget, here is the image that comes to mind. Imagine that, during the election campaign, students, seniors and members of the middle class, who were the topic of much discussion, were asked to go to the store and buy a 1,000-piece puzzle. Everyone knows that it takes a lot of time to put a puzzle like that together. Now, imagine how disappointed those people would be when they discovered that there were pieces missing and that the picture on the puzzle did not match the picture on the box. That is kind of how I feel about this budget.

I will focus on two aspects of the budget. First, I will speak about issues that affect my riding and then I will talk about those that relate to my portfolio as a critic.

The pyrrhotite problem is definitely a crucial issue for Trois-Rivières and the entire Mauricie region. Throughout the four-year tenure of the previous government, I spoke out many times on this issue in order to have the federal government acknowledge its share of responsibility in this monumental catastrophe. For four and a half years, the Conservatives went out of their way to try to make us believe that they did not shoulder any of the responsibility. The Liberals remained silent the entire time, despite the fact that they had an MP from the area. While passing through Trois-Rivières, the future prime minister was suddenly gripped by compassion, we hoped, and recognized, when asked by a journalist, that there was an important human and economic tragedy in the Mauricie region and in Trois-Rivières in particular, and that his government would tackle it after the election, if indeed Canadians voted him into office.

I must admit that at first we had a glimmer of hope when the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance was at the table. There was also \$30 million in the budget. The initial reaction in Trois-Rivières was that we were finally headed in the right direction. Unfortunately, this is not a step in the right direction because we quickly understood that it was the only step.

They are giving us \$30 million, \$10 million a year for three years, to deal with a situation costing in the hundreds of millions. The government is telling a few hundred people that if they are lucky enough to be among the first to submit their compensation claims, they may get some money. However, if they are among the 2,000 people who have exactly the same problem but who are too slow, they will get nothing because that avenue is closed.

During a recent visit to the region, both the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister said that this was the final offer, which makes no sense. If this human and economic tragedy arouses their sympathy, they should come up with a measure that will help all of the victims, not just some of them.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance said that he talks about pyrrhotite every day with his colleagues and is in weekly contact with the pyrrhotite victims' coalition. Unfortunately, this statement by Alain Gélinas, president of the Coalition d'aide aux victimes de la pyrrhotite, belies his assertion:

I leave him [the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance] messages, but he never calls back. He told the media that he talks to people from the coalition every week, but that is not at all true.

This is far from a comprehensive solution, so, unfortunately, the House can be sure that I will continue to talk about pyrrhotite often.

I also want to talk about employment insurance. This is an issue that affects people in my riding and across the country. There are some good measures here, such as reducing the waiting period from two weeks to one.

● (1805)

I am delighted to learn that the 36% of Canadians who have access to the EI system will have one less week to wait before they receive their benefits. How does this solve anything for everyone else, that is, the 60% of Canadians who do not qualify for benefits when they need EI? The universal eligibility threshold of 360 hours should have been the first measure on the list, but we do not see that anywhere in the budget.

These two examples and others that will follow show that this budget throws money around indiscriminately. It announces some interesting measures in certain areas, but nothing that can really solve any problems. It is as though the Liberals want to give a little bit to everyone, but there is not enough to really make a difference anywhere.

We could also talk about our seniors. In Trois-Rivières, seniors make up 20% of the population. Of that 20%, 60% receive the guaranteed income supplement. This gives some idea of the middle class, for example. The average annual income of those seniors is roughly \$18,702. What was the first measure the Liberals introduced? It was a tax break for the wealthy. As we all know, anyone who earns \$45,000 a year or less will not benefit from that tax cut.

The median salary in Quebec is around \$31,500. That is nowhere near the \$85,000 needed to get the highest benefit from these measures. Imagine, then, the reality facing seniors whose annual income is \$18,000. Seniors are amongst the most needy people in our society, and they are the ones who built it. They are being told that this is all coming in July, but that is a long way away. The Liberals promised to make this an immediate priority during their campaign.

I could also mention SMEs. Back home, and elsewhere in Quebec and Canada, SMEs are key to job creation. In fact, 78% of jobs are created by SMEs. During the last Parliament, in a rare moment of unanimity, all parties in the House agreed to lower the tax rate for SMEs from 11% to 9%.

The Budget

The Conservatives wanted to make the change in small increments and drag it out over four years. The Liberals said they wanted to move more quickly. We had the best plan. However, now we are left with the status quo. In the new budget, we see that there is no movement on this. Imagine all the small businesses, such as Volflex back home, which I visited and which is in full expansion, that were counting on this tax cut and now have to completely redo their budgets because of a broken promise.

Let us talk about young people, whose unemployment rate is almost twice as high as the national rate. The budget offers them precious little, except for less money than was announced during the election campaign. There is a shortfall of \$365 million over the first two years of the budget, compared to the announcements made during the election campaign.

In Trois-Rivières, the forestry and aerospace industries were also seriously affected. There is nothing in the budget to kick-start the forestry industry.

My time is quickly running out and I would be remiss if I did not spend a minute on international development, because I am the critic for that portfolio. Although we can take some comfort in the budget increase, we must still recognize that it is not enough to make up for the \$350 million slashed by the previous government. In other words, we are nowhere near the 0.7% of GDP that would allow us to actively contribute to achieving the 2030 sustainable development goals.

We are encouraged by the government's intention to review all Canadian aid programs. However, we hope that this aid will help reduce poverty, the first objective, that it will be aligned with local poverty reduction strategies, that the government will stop tying international aid to commercial objectives, and that we will finally consider international aid not as a donation to charity, but as an international obligation that we must fulfill.

●(1810)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a question related to the bigger picture. Within the federal budget, we have witnessed a number of initiatives that would have a very profound and positive impact on Canadians, no matter what region of the country they live in.

We could talk about the Canada child benefit program. We could talk about the cutback on taxes for the middle class, from which nine million Canadians would benefit. We could talk about the investment for infrastructure that is so badly needed. By improving our infrastructure we would give more life to many of our communities that are in need.

There is so much in terms of benefit through the passage of this budget. When the member takes a look at the many different types of social programming that are incorporated in the budget, would the member not agree that overall it would be very difficult for New Democrats, who have a progressive nature, not to support a budget that would do so much in taking children out of poverty, in improving our communities? Would he not agree that it would be a challenge not to support the budget?

●(1815)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my distinguished colleague for his question. I will respond very simply by saying that, no, it would not be difficult because there are many measures in this budget that are light years away from the interests of the New Democrats, who really do not have the same definition of the middle class as the Liberals do. When a person who makes less than \$45,000 a year does not benefit from tax cuts, it shows that the government is already having problems putting the people in greatest need first. We are being told that the child benefit program will compensate for that, but for people who dream of joining the middle class and are not even getting a tax cut, how will the Liberal budget help them, if they have no children? Once again, there are good things in the budget. I mentioned a few of them. I do not have time to mention others, but the budget does not make Canadians a priority, far from it. Once again, the government is taking a piecemeal approach rather than really solving problems.

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. His constituents are lucky to have someone who is so in tune with their biggest concerns, whether they have to do with local, Quebec, or Canadian issues. I commend him for that.

He called this a budget that throws money around indiscriminately. I found that funny. They throw money around indiscriminately and still manage to triple the projected deficit. What does he think about that?

Mr. Robert Aubin: Mr. Speaker, I thank my seatmate for his very important question.

This is a fundamental problem. So many things were promised during the election campaign. I realize that it would have been difficult to draft a budget that met every commitment. However, that is why people are cynical about politics. When politicians promise something, it is because they have considered the commitments they should make. I imagine that they have also considered what kind of revenue would be needed to implement these measures. Members of the current government start many of their speeches by blaming the previous government. That is exactly the kind of thing that Canadians are sick of hearing. The government should make promises that it is able to keep. Politics will be better for it.

[*English*]

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise to speak to budget 2016. I would like to start by acknowledging the people of Vancouver East for their long-standing commitment to economic, social, and environmental justice.

In Vancouver East, we have a strong history of activism. We yearn for a society where everyone can live with dignity, including those who live in the margins of life. We want a society where everyone has a chance to succeed. Therefore, after 10 long years of a Conservative government, I, like so many of my constituents, had high hopes for change.

The Budget

Like the Liberal government, this is my inaugural federal budget. I wanted so much to see a budget that would demonstrate the government's determination to make real changes through budgetary commitments that matched the slogans and election promises made to Canadians. After all, this is not just child's play. Real lives, real people are impacted by these very real decisions.

Over the last 30 years, workers have helped grow our economy by over 50%. However, those same workers have seen their wages stagnant and retirement security vanish. At the same time, they have watched shareholders and executives walk away with enormous bonuses and payouts. The gap between the rich and everyone else is growing wider and faster here than in most of the developed countries.

It was estimated that by 12:18 p.m. on the first official working day of the year, the average top 100 executives in Canada had already earned what the average full-time employee in Canada would earn this entire year. Those same CEOs often have access to stock option loopholes, loopholes that were set up since 1984 and have been in place ever since. To my astonishment, budget 2016 shows that the Liberals backed off on a previous pledge to close that loophole.

We know that most stock options go to executives of large corporations. The result is that over 90% of the benefit goes to the top 1% of income earners. Tax loopholes cost Canada at least \$10 billion every year.

I had braced myself for the last decade, knowing that this was what I should expect from the previous Conservative and even Liberal governments. What I did not expect was that the current Liberal government's real change in 2016 meant no change for stock option loopholes. Today, the top 100 richest Canadians now hold as much wealth as the bottom 10 million combined. How is that for real change?

An independent analysis has shown that families that will reap the largest benefits from the Liberal government's tax cut are those earning over \$160,000. Who would have known that the definition of poverty, in the Liberal world, would mean those earning over \$160,000? In my world, and in the world of East Vancouver, those on income assistance and those who make minimum wages are folks living in poverty. B.C., by the way, has the distinction of having the lowest minimum wage in the country, no less.

Under budget 2016, those families on income assistance and those making minimum wage would not benefit from the child tax benefit. In fact, anyone making \$21 an hour or less would not qualify for this tax cut. What this means is that all those who are living in real poverty, wanting real change, would not benefit from the child tax benefit at all.

Without significant action from the government, income inequality will continue as precarious part-time, temporary, and contract work continues to become the norm. These positions are disproportionately held by visible minorities, new Canadians, and women.

Also, if one should be so unfortunate as to lose one's job, access to EI is at historic lows, with fewer than four in ten unemployed Canadians able to access benefits when they need it. Eliminating the

new entrant and re-entrant rule would only give an additional 50,000 people access to benefits, but there are currently nearly 850,000 unemployed Canadians not receiving EI benefits. Eight hundred thousand Canadians are still waiting.

● (1820)

Budget 2016 could have created a universal qualifying threshold of 360 hours for EI, but it did not. Budget 2016 could have repealed the Conservatives' harmful reforms to EI, but it did not. Instead, budget 2016 once again uses EI as a slush fund and takes \$6.9 billion of contributions from workers and businesses over three years.

For families who are struggling with sky-high costs for child care, I am afraid that budget 2016 will only serve to disappoint, for there is no funding for child care this year. An iconic international leader, former UN ambassador Stephen Lewis said, "feminism is a vacant construct without a [national] child care program".

The Liberals promised a poverty reduction strategy in budget 2016, yet they did not even allocate any money toward developing one. Central to the issue of poverty reduction is the need for a national affordable housing program. In Vancouver East, we have many families in dire need of safe, secure, affordable housing. Since 1993, previous Liberal governments have cancelled Canada's national affordable housing program. As a result, more than half a million units of affordable housing or co-op housing that would otherwise have been built with federal money have been lost. Across the country, almost 119,000 families are living on the street or are on the verge of becoming homeless.

Real change in budget 2016 would have realized what anti-poverty advocates and housing providers have called for, which is a \$3.2 billion investment to renovate old units and to build 100,000 new units of affordable housing and co-op housing nationwide to reverse the years of decline in federal spending on affordable housing. Instead, budget 2016 falls way short of this. A long-term operating agreement for federal housing is not even fully restored. That is something, by the way, that many Liberal candidates promised during the election. There are 34 housing co-ops in East Vancouver with a total of 1,669 units. If the government does not fully renew operating agreements and ensure support is in place for rent subsidies for low-income families classified as what we call "poor need", those families or individuals, I fear, will become homeless. They will lose their homes. This cannot happen and must not happen, not in 2016.

Adjournment Proceedings

The disappointments of budget 2016 do not stop there. It is shocking to see that the Liberals are failing to invest in a public health care system, an iconic system that makes us proud here in Canada and, I would say, the envy of the world. Even worse, the Liberals are doing nothing concrete to reverse the unilateral cuts of the Conservatives to transfers to provinces and territories. No new money has been set aside for a new health accord. The Liberals have also abandoned their promise to invest \$3 billion over four years for home care deeply needed with Canada's increasingly aging population. There is nothing in the budget for mental health, for palliative care, or for long-term care for seniors. The real change promise was an investment of \$3 billion over the next four years in home care. I have seen seniors whose home care has been reduced to one hour a week. All they can get is a bath a week. This is not real change. This is not how we should treat our seniors. Budget 2016 promised more and it failed to deliver.

There is so much to talk about in this budget. There is so much expectation, so much hope for the government to deliver. That is what the Liberals said they would do. They promised Canadians that they would do better, but I am afraid budget 2016 serves to disappoint.

• (1825)

I hope the government will do better. I hope the Liberals will honour their commitments and make real what they said to Canadians in this last election.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

• (1830)

[*English*]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question to the Liberal government back in February centred on the continued lack of an economic impact study regarding the proposed trans-Pacific partnership. Such a study would provide greater clarity for Canadians on how this massive investment trade deal would impact workers, our communities, and our economy as a whole. It would also help guide the work of the Standing Committee on International Trade, which will embark on a trip across western Canada next week to hear from a select few witnesses about the impacts of the TPP.

There are some studies we can look to now for guidance. An independent study from Tufts University estimates that the TPP would cost 58,000 jobs in Canada while increasing inequality. The study finds the deal would make a negligible difference on GDP: just 0.28% after 10 years.

Many have raised concerns over the TPP's impact on key areas of Canadian public interest, including the auto industry, supply-managed agricultural sectors, intellectual property rights, foreign takeovers of Canadian companies, privacy rights and Internet freedoms, and the affordability of prescription medications.

While some sectors may benefit from lowered tariffs and greater access to certain markets, the TPP's negative impacts on Canadian industry are evidenced by the Conservative government offering \$5 billion in compensation to the auto and dairy sectors for the losses they are expected to suffer; compensation on which the Liberal government has so far turned its back.

The fact of the matter is that the TPP is a bad deal. Nobel Prize-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz went so far as to call it the worst trade deal ever. As I outlined earlier today in question period, Mr. Stiglitz warns that the TPP would erode the rights of workers, kill Canadian jobs, and reverse the principle of polluter pays, making governments pay billions for any attempt to protect the environment.

The Conservatives negotiated the deal under an unprecedented veil of secrecy, and they concluded the deal in the dying days of their government, just two weeks before Canadians voted the Conservatives out of office.

When the Liberals were in opposition, they demanded that the government produce an analysis of the costs and benefits of the agreement on each sector. No such economic impact study has ever been produced, not for the TPP, and I would also point out, not for CETA. The fact that this did not happen before Canada signed onto this deal is ludicrous.

Therefore, I rise in this place tonight to ask this. Will the Liberals live up to their own standards and present an economic impact study of the TPP?

The government must release an analysis of the deal's impacts and come clean with Canadians about the costs of signing onto the Conservatives' TPP.

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her question as well as for her ongoing hard work on the international trade committee.

On October 5, right smack in the middle of a Canadian general election campaign, Canada and 11 other countries in the Asia-Pacific announced the conclusion of the TPP negotiations. This is a complex agreement made up of 30 chapters, tariff schedules and market access outcomes on services, investment, and government procurement involving 12 countries. The agreement was signed by the previous government without consulting Canadians and without truly studying the impacts.

Our new government is taking the responsible approach and consulting with Canadians to hear their views on Canada's participation in the TPP. We will also engage Parliament. In fact, the House Standing Committee on International Trade is currently studying the TPP and holding consultations with Canadians across the country. The committee has already met several stakeholders, and next week it will start travelling to meet with Canadians. The Committee will have hearings next week in Vancouver, Calgary, Regina, and Winnipeg.

Adjournment Proceedings

With respect to the economic impact study, the government is carrying out a study of the economic impact of the TPP. However, given the scope and breadth of the TPP agreement, with over 100,000 tariff lines and service obligations among 12 countries, this will take some time. The government is continuing to work on that, and once completed, it will be made public.

The government is also reviewing the economic analysis of academics such as the study that my hon. friend has mentioned, think tanks, and other organizations that are looking at the TPP.

The government has made a commitment to a robust study of the TPP, and work is ongoing in this regard. The government takes this commitment seriously and is following the Prime Minister's instructions carefully. Specifically, the government is collaborating closely with colleagues and the government is facilitating constructive dialogues with Canadians.

Since November, the Government of Canada has held over 200 interactions with over 400 different stakeholders, which includes all provinces and territories, industry, civil society organizations, think tanks, academics, first nations, and the general public. Global Affairs Canada has also received over 15,000 letters and emails through this consultation process.

Several town halls have taken place. Just two weeks ago I participated in a town hall in Fredericton and in another in Charlottetown, and more are to come. Indeed, on April 27 I will be participating in a town hall in Guelph, in this case organized by the Council of Canadians, and the Minister of International Trade will participate in one in Toronto on May 25 and one in Montreal on June 6.

As our consultations continue, I invite Canadians to share their views with the government, whether it is through the House of Commons international trade committee's consultations, or participating in a town hall with the Minister of International Trade, or sending their views in writing via the TPP website.

The government will continue to be open and transparent with Canadians and Parliament on this issue, an issue that is very important to all Canadians across the country.

• (1835)

Ms. Tracey Ramsey: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. parliamentary secretary for his work as well on this particular file. He has done some great work throughout our committee, and I know that we will be working strongly together.

The parliamentary secretary mentioned the complexity of this deal, which proves even more the need, the really desperate need, for this economic impact study.

We did receive a report from Global Affairs that they were working on a study, but I think that its importance needs to be stressed and that the timeline needs to be moved up on this particular study so that we can further the efforts that we are making in this particular deal. The consultations and the work of the trade committee cannot be a substitute for the economic impact study. It has to be a part of the work that we are doing together.

As far as public involvement is concerned, I do hope for and look forward to our continued efforts in the trade committee and the

consultations that the member across mentioned will take place. In the spirit of transparency, I hope that the 15,000 emails submitted to Global Affairs will also be made public so that all Canadians can see the concerns that Canadians have with the Trans-Pacific Partnership and so that we can have a full, open, transparent debate around whether this trade deal is good or not for Canada.

Mr. David Lametti: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member once again for her additional comments.

Our responsibility to Canadians is founded on a commitment to be transparent with all government decisions, and this includes an open dialogue on the merits of the TPP for business, for workers, and for Canadians writ large.

It is our responsibility to ensure the right decision is made on whether or not Canada participates in the TPP. The government believes in the merit of impact analyses from various sources with respect to trade agreements. In the Minister of International Trade's recent consultations on the TPP, she has encouraged various groups that have conducted analyses on Canada's trade agreements to share these with the government.

Mr. Speaker, as you can see, much work has been done, and there is a significant amount of work that remains.

The government looks forward to the coming weeks and months as these conversations continue.

FINANCE

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on February 18, I asked the finance minister why he was betraying the spending promises he made during the election campaign, which are the same promises that he was explicitly instructed by the Prime Minister to keep: to lower the debt-to-GDP ratio every year and return Canada to a balanced budget in 2019. Unfortunately, he provided the House with no explanation whatsoever.

During the election, the Liberals' plans to borrow money were very specific. They asked for a mandate to borrow \$10 billion this year and \$25 billion in total over the course of their first mandate. Canadian voters accepted this very specific plan, and they did so under the understanding that this spending would be kept within a clear financial framework. This is very important, because as parliamentarians we must understand that Canadians do not give the finance minister a blank cheque to borrow as much money as he wants without any limits.

The Prime Minister could have asked Canadian voters for a mandate to spend whatever he thought was necessary to achieve his goals for Canada, but that is not what he did. Instead, the Prime Minister took great efforts to promise Canadians that his government would have clear financial targets and a clear plan to balance the books. The Prime Minister went further, giving the finance minister very clear instructions to deliver on those promises. He wrote in the very first point of the finance minister's mandate letter that he expects the minister to meet the government's fiscal anchors, including a balanced budget by 2019. Now we know that the Prime Minister's mandate letters are his marching orders to cabinet.

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Many Canadians thought the Prime Minister was signalling that the contents of these mandate letters actually meant something, because he took the unusual step of posting them publicly on his website. The Prime Minister wrote very clearly that the Minister of Finance and the entire cabinet were supposed to achieve their goals within the framework of balancing the federal budget by 2019. However, just a few months ago, the finance minister signalled that he would ignore his mandate letter, and we began hearing rumours of massive open-ended spending. The finance minister will say that unexpected things had happened and that is why he abandoned his financial promises and ignored his mandate letter. However, does that mean that all of the Prime Minister's instructions to cabinet are conditional? If that is the case, I think this would come as a big surprise to many Canadians.

Of course, circumstances will change over a four-year government mandate, but when a Canadian reads the Prime Minister's mandate letter to his ministers, they rightfully believe that the ministers will do whatever he or she can to achieve what the Prime Minister asked of them, even when unexpected challenges arise. If that is not the case, and these mandate letters were simply an outline of things that would be nice to achieve but not truly necessary, then Canadians deserve to know that.

On February 18, I asked the following question: "Will the finance minister confirm that he will do as the Prime Minister has directed him and balance the budget in this term? If not, what was the point of the mandate letter?"

We have now seen the budget, which shows that the finance minister will fall short of the Prime Minister's expectations. His mandate letter instructed him to continue to reduce the debt-to-GDP ratio throughout his mandate. His mandate letter also instructed him to meet the financial anchor of balancing the budget by 2019. Instead, he wrote a budget plan that will accomplish neither of these fundamental goals that the Prime Minister directed him to achieve.

Therefore, I will ask it again: What was the point of the finance minister's mandate letter?

• (1845)

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like first to thank my hon. colleague for his interest in the budget, and also for his great work on the finance committee.

In electing a new government, millions of Canadians signalled their desire for change. Our government was elected in part because we took that desire seriously. We offered Canadians an ambitious new plan for a strong middle class and promised that we would do all we could to help every Canadian succeed.

Budget 2016 is an important part of fulfilling that promise. It offers immediate help to those who need it most, and lays the groundwork for sustained, inclusive economic growth that will benefit Canada's middle class and those working hard to join it.

In particular, this budget is about Canadian families. We have met with them, we have heard their stories, and we share their concerns. This budget is about the things that matter most to them.

For generations, Canadians have worked hard, secure in the belief that their hard work would be rewarded. They trusted that in exchange for their honest efforts, they would realize greater opportunities for themselves and for their families. This sense of optimism, paired with government policies that strengthened the middle class, help to make Canada the country it is today.

In recent years, however, the benefits of economic growth have been shared by fewer and fewer Canadians. Although household costs continue to rise, the income of most families has barely risen over the past 30 years, making it harder to make ends meet. Some families have responded to this pressure by taking on more debt. However, the more a family owes, the more difficult it is for it to save for the future. As the ability to pay for their kids' education, for their aging parents' care, and for their own retirement diminishes, Canadians are questioning whether the promise of Canadian progress has passed.

However, this is not true for all Canadians. Members of Canada's wealthiest 0.01% have seen their incomes more than double over the past 30 years. The net result is that even though there has been economic growth over the past three decades, too often the benefits have been felt only by already wealthy Canadians, while the middle class and those working hard to join it continue to struggle.

The need for more inclusive growth is not new. It has long been understood that a strong economy starts with a strong middle class. When middle-class Canadians have more money to save, invest and grow the economy, everyone benefits. With budget 2016, our government seeks to help more Canadians, and restore Canadians' confidence in a brighter, more prosperous future.

To do that, budget 2016 focuses on growth not austerity. It includes measures that will grow the economy for the benefit of every Canadian. By making smart investments now, we can help strengthen and expand the middle class, reduce inequality among Canadians, and position Canada for sustained economic growth in the years to come. Of course, the decisions we make cannot be made in isolation. Here at home and across the world, dramatic shifts are taking place that represent both challenges to, and opportunities for, the Canadian economy.

Managing Canada's ongoing demographic shift means that we must do more to invest in young Canadians, in post-secondary education, and in training and innovation. Global shifts in trade will allow us to strengthen economic ties with other regions and countries, but may make us more vulnerable to external economic shocks.

Finally, shifts in technology toward cleaner economies and more digitally connected ones cannot be ignored. Canada can either take advantage of these opportunities or be left behind.

We have listened to Canadians. That is why budget 2016 answers two issues: helping Canadians and their families, and growing the economy. This answers the needs of Canadian families.

Adjournment Proceedings

Mr. Phil McColeman: Mr. Speaker, I must say that was not an answer to the very specific question that I put to the minister as to what was the meaning of publicly showing his mandate letter from the Prime Minister, which was very specific.

I will remind the member what the question was. Why is the Minister of Finance, in his budget, not meeting the fiscal targets and anchors that were set out by the Prime Minister to him and what Canadians voted for when they voted the Liberal Party into power?

The response continues to be some kind of platitudes about this is what Canadians wanted. Canadians were offered a very specific proposition, and the member is still not answering this question. What purpose does the mandate letter serve if the government is not going to follow through on the promises made to Canadians?

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne: Mr. Speaker, I would respectfully disagree with the hon. member. I heard his question, but this government was elected on October 19 in order to deliver for Canadian families and the middle class.

People have been saying two things to us: help them and their families, and grow the economy. That is exactly what we have

proposed in budget 2016. We reduced taxes for the middle class, which is helping nine million Canadians. We introduced the Canada child benefit, which is going to benefit nine families out of ten. We are also making historic investments in infrastructure, innovation, and in science.

The mandate letter was the charter that the Prime Minister gave to the finance minister, but one thing that was clear was that we wanted to hear from Canadians and to make sure we grew the economy. That is what Canadians have been asking from us and that is what we are delivering by historic investments in infrastructure, in science and technology, and having a growth agenda. This is exactly what we will continue to do.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:50 p.m.)

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