



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

House of Commons Debates

VOLUME 148 • NUMBER 052 • 1st SESSION • 42nd PARLIAMENT

OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Tuesday, May 10, 2016

—

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, May 10, 2016

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[*English*]

The Speaker: Motions. The hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle.

Mr. Andrew Scheer: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if you might find unanimous consent for the following motion.

I move that, notwithstanding any standing order, special order, or usual practice of the House, Bill C-15, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 22, 2016 and other measures be divided into two bills, namely Bill C-15A and Bill C-15B, as follows:

(1) Bill C-15A shall contain all the provisions of the bill respecting the Canadian Forces Members and Veterans Re-establishment and Compensation Act to, among other things: (a) replace “permanent impairment allowance” with “career impact allowance”; (b) replace “totally and permanently incapacitated” with “diminished earning capacity”; (c) increase the percentage in the formula used to calculate the earnings loss benefit; (d) specify when a disability award becomes payable and clarify the formula used to calculate the amount of a disability award; (e) increase the amounts of a disability award; (f) increase the amount of a death benefit; and all the provisions that provide, among other things, that the Minister of Veterans Affairs must pay to a person who received a disability award or death benefit under that act before April 1, 2017, an amount that represents the increase in the amount for the disability award or the death benefit, as the case may be, and the consequential amendments to the Children of Deceased Veterans Education Assistance Act, the Pension Act, and the Income Tax Act.

(2) Bill C-15B shall contain all the remaining provisions of Bill C-15 and retain the status on the Order Paper that it had prior to the adoption of this order, and that Bill C-15A be deemed read a second time and referred to committee of the whole, deemed considered in committee of the whole, deemed reported without amendment, deemed concurred in at report stage, and deemed read a third time and passed, and that the law clerk and parliamentary counsel be

authorized to make any technical changes or corrections as may be necessary, and that the bills be reprinted.

I wonder if I could find unanimous consent for that motion, so we can show our veterans that we support them and appreciate the service they have made for our country.

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

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: There is no unanimous consent.

I will return to introduction of private members' bills. I think I missed the fact that the hon. member for Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing was rising.

* * *

DEFENCE OF CANADA MEDAL ACT (1946-1989)

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): moved for leave to introduce Bill C-270, An Act respecting the establishment and award of a Defence of Canada Medal (1946-1989).

She said: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to table this bill. I rise to reintroduce an act respecting the establishment and award of a defence of Canada medal for the men and women who served Canada during the Cold War.

[*Translation*]

The medal officially pays tribute to those who served in the defence of Canada from 1946 to 1989. That was when, as states developed weapons of war, we became aware of the fragility of peace and our own vulnerability.

[*English*]

These individuals served in the protection of Canada from threats posed by the countries behind the Iron Curtain. They were trained and prepared to defend Canada in all ways necessary, but fortunately were never engaged on home soil.

The medal is intended to be awarded to individuals who served in regular and reserve forces, police forces, emergency measures organizations, as well as civil organizations. The act represents the vision of retired Captain Ulrich Krings, and has widespread support across the country, especially from those who worked hard to keep us safe and prepared during those unsettling times.

Government Orders

[Translation]

I thank my colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue for seconding my bill.

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

* * *

[English]

PETITIONS

FALUN GONG

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I am presenting a petition signed by constituents in my riding of Etobicoke Centre and throughout the GTA. The over 3,000 petitioners are concerned by the ongoing persecution campaign to eradicate Falun Gong, a spiritual practice with the core principles of truthfulness, compassion, and tolerance. The petitioners urge the passage of a resolution that would put a stop to the persecution and murder of Falun Gong practitioners, and seek Canadian legislation to combat forced organ harvesting of incarcerated Falun Gong practitioners in China.

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the member for Thornhill, and as co-chair of the Parliamentary Friends of Falun Gong, I too present a petition signed by several thousand of my constituents, and constituents across Canada. The Chinese government's own human organ transplantation and execution statistics indicate that between 45,000 and 60,000 Falun Gong practitioners have been killed for their organs, which were then sold for profit. The signatories are petitioning the Canadian government to call for an end to the unethical organ harvesting of Falun Gong practitioners in China.

•(1010)

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to join my colleagues on both sides of the House to present a petition from 4,000 members from both my riding and across Canada who are requesting Parliament and our Canadian government to publicly call for an end to the persecution of the Falun Gong practitioners in China, and amend legislation to combat forced organ harvesting, as well as passing a resolution to establish measures to stop the Chinese Communist regime's crime of systematically murdering Falun Gong practitioners for their organs.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I too rise with members of this House to present this petition from thousands of people across this country, which requests that Parliament and the Canadian government pass a resolution to establish measures to stop the Chinese Communist regime's crimes of systematically murdering Falun Gong practitioners for their organs, to amend Canadian legislation to combat forced organ harvesting, and to publicly call for an end to the persecution of Falun Gong practitioners in China. I am pleased to rise with this petition.

[Translation]

TAX ON BABY PRODUCTS

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present my petition to eliminate the tax on essential baby products.

In my opinion, lots of products, such as frozen pizzas and maraschino cherries, are not essential. There is no federal tax on those products, but people have to pay tax on essential baby products such as diapers. I think it is only logical to get rid of the tax on basic baby care items, as well as breastfeeding products as a way to promote breastfeeding in Canada.

I sincerely hope that members will heed the petitioners and eliminate the federal tax on these products.

* * *

[English]

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2016, NO. 1.

BILL C-15—TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know colleagues have been waiting for this moment for some time. I move:

That, in relation to Bill C-15, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 22, 2016 and other measures, not more than one further sitting day shall be allotted to the consideration at second reading stage of the Bill;

and

That, 15 minutes before the expiry of the time provided for Government Orders on the day allotted to the consideration at second reading stage of the said Bill, any proceedings before the House shall be interrupted, if required for the purpose of this Order, and, in turn, every question necessary for the disposal of the said stage of the Bill shall be put forthwith and successively, without further debate or amendment.

The Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 67.1, there will now be a 30-minute question period. I invite hon. members who wish to ask questions to rise in their places so the Chair has some idea of the number of members who wish to participate in this question period.

•(1015)

Mr. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, two days of debate is all we have had on the budget. When the government House leader who moved the motion said this is the moment that all members were waiting for, I can certainly assure him that nobody on this side of the House was waiting for that motion. We were waiting for more opportunities to debate the bill.

Government Orders

I do not know why the Liberals are afraid of debating the bill. It is possibly because it is saddling Canadians with massive amounts of debt, that they are borrowing billions more than they promised during the election campaign. That is probably why they want to get it off the floor of the House of Commons and into committee. This is not a budget that they are proud of. This is a budget that breaks election promises. This is a budget that will saddle future Canadians with billions of dollars in debt. That is probably why they want to get it out of the House and into committee. That is terribly undemocratic.

I suspect that the Minister of Finance does not enjoy debating in the House because he gets questions that make him uncomfortable. He cannot control it like a media opportunity or a photo op. The Liberals cannot control the flow of the House, and that is why they want to get it out and into committee.

I ask the Minister of Finance why he felt that two days of debate was long enough, why he is not proud of this budget, and why he broke his election promise to only run a \$10-billion deficit.

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the amount of debate and the speakers on Bill C-15 is either comparable or much higher than debates on budget implementation acts from the previous government. In most cases, those BIAs were close to double the number of pages that are in Bill C-15.

I can say that including today, our government will have provided for almost 19 hours of debate at second reading. If we look at the previous session of Parliament, the previous government shut down second reading debate on two budget bills, Bill C-43 and Bill C-59, in under 10 hours. We have already nearly doubled the amount of time for debate at second reading on Bill C-15.

We are proud of the bill, and we are very much looking forward to putting it forward and getting it passed for Canadians so we can make a real difference in their lives.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government's decision to use time allocation is appalling and disgusting. The minister just admitted that they allowed as much time for this debate as the previous Conservative government. I remember that during the election campaign, just six or seven months ago, Liberal candidates went all over the country saying that they would do better than the Conservatives, that they would change how things are done here in the House of Commons. Unfortunately, the opposite is happening.

[*English*]

We have exactly the same tone now in this House after the last few weeks of imposing closure time after time, as we had under the former Conservative government, yet Liberals promised to do differently.

My question is very simple. Why have the Liberals betrayed their electors, and why are they bringing exactly the same tone back to the House of Commons that Canadians rejected last October?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Speaker, my colleague said that there has not been enough debate on the bill, yet just one hour into the second reading debate, the NDP finance critic moved a motion to end debate on the bill.

While the wording was judged inadmissible by the Speaker, the motion would have sent us into an election, of course. I know that is not what he really wants, and we all see this ruse for what it most clearly was.

I want to know why the NDP do not support veterans and their families receiving their well-earned benefits as soon as possible. Do they really oppose moving the qualifying age for the old age security back to age 65? Does the NDP really oppose the employment insurance benefits in the bill that are proposed? Our view is that we do not think so.

We want to get the bill to committee where it can be properly studied and where witnesses can be heard, so that we can move forward on helping Canadians in the way that they need and deserve.

● (1020)

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I find curious what the Minister of Finance said about the need to get the bill to committee. I do not know if the minister realizes that the committee has already set up the schedule of witnesses. The committee is starting the study of the bill today by having officials come in from various ministries within the Government of Canada. Therefore, picking up on my colleague's thoughts at the beginning of this period, I believe that what this is about is the fact that the more we shine light on the budget contents, the more concerned we become.

The best way to shine light on the budget content is by debating it here in the House, on the floor, and not sending it off to a committee to take a look at. It is an excuse to send it to the committee to work on at the same time we currently are, being respectful of the deadlines the government has with respect to these bills.

I mean, there are things we have found so far in the budget. First of all, it is assuming that we are in deficit when we know we gave the Liberals a surplus at the beginning. They took private-sector projections and manipulated them for their own good. They have padded billions in spending and deficit in there that have no real home and no information for Canadians on what it is for. It is exaggerating how many jobs could be created.

We have different offices here in the House, such as the parliamentary budget officer, who can shine more light on the budget, and we get that information. My colleagues in the NDP ask for more information, they get it, and they are able to talk about the effect on small business. This is the kind of debate that has to happen.

Why is the minister so afraid of more information coming out on the House of Commons floor? Why is he in such a rush to shuffle the bill through?

Government Orders

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Speaker, it is actually a little difficult to take my colleague from across the way seriously. In the previous government, the Conservatives used time allocation over 100 times in the last Parliament. Now that they are in opposition, clearly they seem to have a different point of view.

I want to reiterate that we have had almost 19 hours of debate on this budget bill; whereas, for Bill C-43, for example, a bill that had 478 pages, which is significantly more than twice the number of pages this budget has, we had a debate of under 10 hours.

We believe we have had a full and robust debate. We believe we should move forward so we can make a real difference for Canadians, so for example, we can get the benefits that veterans deserve to them in a timely and efficient way.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have to admit, I have been tested and I am a little red-green colour blind, but I can say that for the years I have been here, I am clearly becoming red-blue colour blind in all measures of the sense, because we are seeing exactly here what the Conservatives have done in the past.

It is interesting; if the Liberals want to measure themselves to the previous government, when it comes to the Senate, lobbying, ministers and fundraising, and all the issues that are so important for Canadians, they can set that bar all they want. However, my comment to the minister is that to suggest members of Parliament from any side of the House do not support our veterans is absolutely outrageous, shameful, and disrespectful. My grandfather died in the fall of Burma; my other grandfather served in the Royal Navy. We all support our veterans. For him to wrap himself around that element is nothing short of a disgrace to the House.

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Speaker, as we think about what we are putting forward, we do need to reflect on the fact that our budget puts forth measures that would make a real difference for Canadians. We are going to make a difference for Canadians in many different ways.

We have identified for this House important measures that would make a huge difference for Canadian families. We need to move forward on them quickly, because we know we can make a difference for families with our Canada child benefit.

We know there are measures in our budget that could make a real difference for students by increasing student grants for them for the next school year.

We know that, yes, we are putting forward changes in benefits for veterans in our country, which would make a real difference for veterans. They would provide them with the service they require in order to actually get an understanding of what they are eligible for. Most importantly, they would change their situation so they could be better off in the future.

We are proud of this budget. We want to move forward rapidly to ensure that Canadians have the benefits they deserve and need. We look forward to the support of this House in order to do that in an expeditious fashion.

• (1025)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important to make a couple of, I believe, valid

points. First, what we are really talking about with respect to the budget implementation bill is an election promise that was made in our platform and now is being delivered.

The Minister of Finance talked about the Canada child benefit and how it would be greatly enhanced. One of my personal favourites is the proposed increase to the guaranteed income supplement.

While I was in opposition I said that time allocation is necessary at times when the opposition is unable to work with the government or the government is not able to get agreement to get things passed in a timely fashion. That is what we are looking at today. We are trying to get the bill passed in a timely fashion, and that is why we sometimes have to use time allocation.

Would the Minister of Finance not agree that this is an important piece of legislation that was part of our election platform, and Canadians want to see it put in place and that is why we had to use time allocation to ensure it gets done in a timely fashion?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Speaker, I would like to confirm that we have put measures in our budget that are related to the election campaign that we put forward for Canadians. We have made sure that the measures in our budget implementation act are financial measures that would make a real difference for our country.

The member specifically mentioned the measures that we want to put in place for seniors. The top-ups for seniors in our country are focused on single seniors, seniors who are three times more likely to be living in poverty than other seniors. That top-up alone, which would be up to \$947 for a single senior, would help 900,000 seniors in this country and put them in a better situation.

It is important to note that these measures would come into effect in July. Based on the current schedules, that would be on July 27, 2016.

We are looking forward to making a difference in the near term for so many seniors in this country. This is what people voted for, and we are proud to be able to bring this forward on a timely basis.

Mr. Alexander Nuttall (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I quote the throne speech:

Canada succeeds in large part because here, diverse perspectives and different opinions are celebrated, not silenced.

Parliament shall be no exception.

In this Parliament, all members will be honoured, respected and heard, wherever they sit. For here, in these chambers, the voices of all Canadians matter...

Through careful consideration and respectful conduct, the Government can meet these challenges, and all others brought before it.

Could the finance minister tell me if he is looking to end debate just so the government can get access to the Canadian chequebook, to Canadian taxpayers' money? Is that the reason, that you just cannot wait to spend their money?

Government Orders

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Before going on, I just want to remind hon. members that they do go through the Chair, and I have no intention of touching any chequebook at all.

The hon. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Speaker, we take respect for Parliament seriously. The way we start is by putting forth a budget that is really focused on how we can help Canadians. I would like to remind the member opposite of a few numbers that might be helpful for him to put that in context.

In 2010, the previous government put forward Bill C-9, which was a budget bill with 904 pages. I do not know how Parliament can go through 904 pages, but I do know that Canadians expect us to go through what we want to go through, which is the budget that we have put forward and which is a much more reasonable budget for people to understand.

I would remind him of Bill C-13, put forward in 2011 with 658 pages, again vastly more than triple the number of pages in our budget 2016. Maybe I can move to Bill C-43 from 2014, with 478 pages.

We will take no lessons from members on the opposite side about respecting Parliament. We have debated the budget for almost twice as many hours as they put forward in Bill C-43 and Bill C-59. We have had the time we need to reflect on this legislation, and we would like to move forward so we can make a difference for Canadians, which is what they elected us to do.

• (1030)

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to echo the comments of my colleague in saying how disappointing and unacceptable it is to hear the new Liberal government hold up the previous Conservative government as a barometer of respect for democracy. I do not think that is what Canadians voted for when they went to the polls last October.

This is the third time this session that the Liberal government has implemented closure on the House. To hear the finance minister suggest that those who are standing up for democracy in the House are somehow disrespecting veterans is absolutely shameful. If veterans fought and stand for anything in this country, it is that they stand up for the democratic rights of all Canadians and the people in this chamber to have the democratic ability to hold governments to account. That is what our veterans are there for. To somehow perversely suggest that we are not supporting veterans by standing up for democracy is the height of chicanery.

The government says that 19 hours is sufficient time for parliamentarians in the House to debate a budget that would spend somewhere close to \$200 billion. I would like the finance minister to tell Canadians if he thinks that 19 hours are sufficient for all parliamentarians in the House to hold the government to account and whether he thinks that parliamentarians in the House have the right to stand and represent their constituents by having their say and their perspectives voiced on this budget, or if he thinks that just does not matter.

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Speaker, in my estimation, the height of chicanery might well be the fact that the NDP finance critic, one

hour into the debate, moved forward for closure of the debate, knowing full well that would not allow us in any way to have a proper debate.

We want to move forward. We have had 19 hours of debate on this bill. It is a bill that brings forward measures that we know the members opposite recognize would make a real difference for Canadians. We are going to find a way for Canadian families to be significantly better off. Nine out of 10 families with children would have an average \$2,300 more per year. Those cheques would start to go out in July.

Students would have 50% larger grants. If they are in low-income families, it would go from \$2,000 to \$3,000 a year, a 50% increase, making it much more possible for 250,000 students from low-income families to be better off.

This is an important set of measures that would make a real difference for families struggling to get into the middle class and those already in the middle class who are anxious and struggling to figure out how to support their families. We are looking forward to making a real difference for Canadian families. That is what this budget would do.

Mr. Mike Bossio (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the finance minister for the hundreds of thousands of Canadians he consulted on this budget.

To emphasize the benefits that this budget would have to my rural community and rural communities across Canada, the \$500-million investment in digital infrastructure would go a long way to help small businesses grow and compete on the world stage. The infrastructure investments that were announced in this budget would greatly transform a number of rural municipalities in my riding that are looking for upgrades in their sewage treatment plants, which are about to break down, or expand the water filtration plant that is serving both a local municipality and the Mohawk territory. The filtration plant that exists today is already past its maximum use.

As for the guaranteed income supplement, when I knocked on seniors' doors, they said to me, "Mike, I'm trying to figure out, do I heat or do I eat".

The Canada child benefit would lift hundreds of thousands of children out of poverty, including in my own riding.

I would like the minister to, once again, point out how much this budget would impact rural Canada and why we need to get to work to bring about growth in rural Canada.

• (1035)

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's observations. We worked hard in budget 2016 to make sure we would create benefits for Canadians across the country from coast to coast. That means helping Canadians who live in urban centres. It also means helping Canadians who live in rural or centres that are hard to get to. We have a number of measures in our budget that are going to make a real difference for rural communities.

Government Orders

The member correctly pointed out the measures that we are putting in place around high-speed Internet across this country. We recognize that for Canadians to stay linked to an increasingly global world, they need to have access to that global world. We know that applies not only in cities where it is often better to get that access, but also in rural communities where the last mile of fibre can often be very expensive.

We put in our budget a \$500-million investment over the next five years in order to improve access for rural communities to link to the global community through high-speed Internet access. This is a real measure that can allow families, and the children of families who are living in rural communities, to see a future in the place where they have actually grown up and where people have brought up their families.

We also recognize that infrastructure, while critically important in big cities, can also make a real difference in rural communities. It is not only about mass transit systems; it is about roads and bridges. It is not only about waste-water systems in cities, but it is about recognizing that with climate change, what is happening to those waste-water systems across the country is that they often need to be renovated and upgraded.

That is why we put infrastructure money into transit, and into roads and bridges. That is why we put infrastructure money into upgrading our waste-water systems across the country. It is going to make a real difference for Canadians who live in hard-to-access places. It will make their lives better, and it will make our country better.

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is something that we have not talked about today. In April, the job numbers for Alberta showed another 20,000 losses. There have been reports that due to the Fort McMurray fire, Alberta's unemployment rate will rise to 15%. What I am concerned about is that this bill does nothing to give the energy sector regulatory certainty. It does nothing to help retain labour in Alberta. If we want to see the economy grow again in western Canada, we have to figure out a way to keep people in Alberta through this economic downturn.

The bill alludes to a carbon tax, which is so detrimental to my province at this point in time. It does nothing for small businesses. In fact, it stalls a decrease in the tax rate that many people were depending upon. It increases debt to this country. Certainly, the minister's budget projections will be affected by the natural disaster that occurred this week in the northern part of the province.

I am asking a very serious question, one which I hope the minister will give more than his pat response to. I am asking with a deep level of sincerity. Why is the minister curtailing debate on this bill when the people in my province need something better than what is in there?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Speaker, we recognize there are enormous challenges today, this week, in Fort McMurray. The people of Alberta are going through some enormous stress that is, frankly, unimaginable for most of us. We stand shoulder to shoulder with the people in Alberta who are going through these challenges. We are committed to working together to ensure the restoration and renewal of Fort McMurray. We have started by ensuring that we will

match donations to the Red Cross. As of today, those donations that we matched are in the order of magnitude of \$60 million, which is an enormous tribute to the efforts of Canadians across the country to stand together with their fellow Canadians in a time of real need. We know that is increased challenge for people in Alberta at a time when they are already facing real challenges due to the change in oil prices.

In our budget, we have presented a number of initiatives that we know will make a difference, and there are other initiatives that are yet to come that can make a real difference.

Our initiative around employment insurance will make a difference for people who are struggling due to job loss. They can get into the system one week quicker. It provides people more certainty that they can get into the system faster for training dollars, for the opportunity to think about what their future would look like. That shortening of two weeks to one week in the employment insurance system has real and measurable impact on people in Alberta and people in other parts of the country, like Newfoundland and Labrador, Saskatchewan, and northern Ontario, where they are facing real challenges.

By looking at places where we have had a sharp and sustained increase in unemployment and increasing the number of weeks that they have available for employment insurance, we know that we are creating a buffer against a challenge that is facing people in Alberta in particular and in some other regions of the country.

We are also looking forward to what we can do in the future. We put in our budget some measures around infrastructure that are long term in nature. We started with the first couple of years. We will be coming forward within this calendar year to talk about our long-term infrastructure plans which will have a material impact upon Alberta and other parts of the country that are looking to ensure that people get back to work and that their long-term productivity is higher.

We also, very importantly, put forward an agenda around innovation that we know can make a long-term difference in a place like Alberta. We put \$800 million over the next four years into an innovation fund. We will be coming back to Parliament, to Canadians, to talk about how we want to set up an innovation agenda.

I am looking forward to this coming Monday when I will meet with my economic advisory council to talk about how that innovation agenda can specifically impact places like Alberta; how we can ensure that we take the enormous reservoir of talent in Alberta and ensure that we use that talent, not only in the resource sector, but in other ways that can be successful.

We will be focused on the resource sector. We will be focused on how we can be effective in Alberta. We will be focused on how we can make real improvements for the long term for people who are going through real challenges.

• (1040)

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to build on the finance minister's comments.

Government Orders

We heard about the heart-wrenching situation taking place in Alberta. The reality is that the budget bill before us, the omnibus budget bill, does make changes to EI. While some of those changes are welcome, they certainly do not go far enough. In fact, workers in Edmonton, southern Saskatchewan, Winnipeg, and other parts of the country who desperately need changes to be made to EI so that they can access EI are not able to. We are talking about workers who have been deeply affected by the downturn in the extractive sector.

While we hear comforting rhetoric from the minister, the NDP proposed splitting the bill so that we could get at fixing EI for Canadians who need it most, but the government disagreed.

We have to be clear that this omnibus budget bill, and that is what it is, does not go nearly far enough when it comes to making the changes to EI that are necessary for Canadians.

Furthermore, as my colleagues have reiterated, when Canadians voted on October 19, they were told by the Liberals that they were voting for real change. The cutting off of debate today is the opposite of that. It is certainly in line with the anti-democratic approach that we saw from the previous Conservative government. Not only are the measures inadequate in this budget, but certainly, the failure to give us the opportunity to scrutinize the budget properly certainly flies in the face of that commitment to Canadians of real change.

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Speaker, this budget implementation act is absolutely not an omnibus bill. The measures in the budget implementation act are directly related to budget 2016. Over 100 pages of the budget are related to tax measures, important tax measures that we know will make a real difference for Canadians. Tax measures are complicated. In order to be open and transparent, we have to help Canadians to understand them clearly, evaluate what we are doing clearly, and show that in our budget itself.

I would like to focus specifically on employment insurance. We took measured approaches in employment insurance in our budget bill in order to ensure that we make a real difference for Canadians as they face some challenges. I would like to focus first on some things that will impact Canadians across the country.

As I mentioned, we have changed employment insurance so that rather than waiting for two weeks to get into the EI system we will allow people to get into the EI system within one week. This is important. We have an increasingly volatile situation with the kind of technological change that goes on with globalization. We know that allowing people to get into the EI system more rapidly is critically important. It is important because the largest single bucket of training dollars in our country is actually through the employment insurance system. For people to get access to that training, they need to get into the system. We do not want to have people wait. We want to get them into the system as quickly as possible. In budget 2016, we increased the amount of training dollars in the employment insurance system, which will help Canadians to actually retrain once they get into the system. Those are measures that will be applicable for Canadians across the country.

In addition, as I have mentioned, in 12 regions we expanded the amount of time available for EI. We believe that will have a real impact in those regions by helping Canadians.

● (1045)

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings at this time and put forthwith the question on the motion now before the House.

[English]

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Call in the members.

● (1125)

[Translation]

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

(Division No. 50)

YEAS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Alleslev	Amos
Anandasangaree	Arseneault
Arya	Ayoub
Badawey	Bagnell
Bains	Baylis
Beech	Bibeau
Bittle	Blair
Boissonnault	Bossio
Bratina	Breton
Brisson	Caesar-Chavannes
Carr	Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Casey (Charlottetown)	Chagger
Champagne	Chen
Cormier	Cuzner
Dabrusin	Damoff
DeCoursey	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Di Iorio
Dion	Drouin
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dzerowicz	Easter
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Ellis	Erskine-Smith
Eyolfson	Fergus
Fillmore	Finnigan
Fisher	Fonseca
Foote	Fragiskatos
Fraser (West Nova)	Fraser (Central Nova)
Fry	Fuhr

Government Orders

Garneau	Gerretsen	Gallant	Garrison
Goldsmith-Jones	Goodale	Généreux	Genuis
Gould	Graham	Gill	Gladu
Grewal	Hajdu	Godin	Gourde
Hardie	Harvey	Hardcastle	Harder
Holland	Housefather	Harper	Hughes
Hutchings	Iacono	Jeneroux	Johns
Jones	Jordan	Julian	Kelly
Jowhari	Kang	Kent	Kitchen
Khalid	Khera	Kmiec	Kwan
Lametti	Lamoureux	Lake	Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)	LeBlanc	Laverdière	Leitch
Lebouthillier	Lefebvre	Liepert	Lobb
Lemieux	Leslie	Lukiwski	MacGregor
Levitt	Lightbound	MacKenzie	Maguire
Lockhart	Long	Malcolmson	Marcel
Longfield	MacAulay (Cardigan)	Masse (Windsor West)	Mathysen
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maloney	May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	McCauley (Edmonton West)
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)		McColeman	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
May (Cambridge)		Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)	Moore
McCallum	McDonald	Nantel	Nater
McGuinty	McKay	Nicholson	Nuttall
McKenna	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	Obhrai	O'Toole
McLeod (Northwest Territories)	Mendès	Paul-Hus	Pauzé
Mendicino	Mihychuk	Plamondon	Poillievre
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Sœurs)		Quach	Raitt
Monsef		Rankin	Rayes
Morneau	Morrissey	Reid	Rempel
Murray	Nassif	Richards	Saganash
Nault	O'Connell	Sansoucy	Saroya
Oliphant	Oliver	Scheer	Schmale
O'Regan	Ouellette	Shields	Shiple
Paradis	Peschisolido	Sopuck	Sorenson
Petitpas Taylor	Philpott	Stanton	Ste-Marie
Picard	Poissant	Scarpaleggia	Strahl
Qualtrough	Ratansi	Stubbs	Sweet
Rioux	Robillard	Tilson	Trost
Rodriguez	Romanado	Trudel	Van Loan
Rudd	Ruimy	Vecchio	Viersen
Rusnak	Sahota	Wagantall	Warawa
Saini	Sajjan	Warkentin	Watts
Samson	Sangha	Waugh	Webber
Sarai	Scarpaleggia	Weir	Wong — 132
Schiefke	Schulte		
Serré	Sgro		
Shanahan	Sheehan		
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)	Sidhu (Brampton South)		
Sikand	Simms		
Sohi	Sorbara		
Spengemann	Tabbara		
Tan	Tootoo		
Trudeau	Vandal		
Vandenbeld	Vaughan		
Whalen	Wilkinson		
Wilson-Raybould	Wrzesnewskyj		
Young	Zahid — 168		

NAYS

Members

Abouttaif	Albas
Albrecht	Allison
Anderson	Angus
Arnold	Ashton
Aubin	Barlow
Barsalou-Duval	Beaulieu
Benson	Berthold
Bezan	Blaikie
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Block	Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet	Brassard
Brousseau	Brown
Calkins	Cannings
Caron	Carrie
Chong	Choquette
Christopherson	Clarke
Clement	Cooper
Davies	Deltell
Diotte	Doherty
Donnelly	Dreeschen
Dubé	Duvall
Egliniski	Falk
Fast	Fortin

PAIRED

Nil

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I declare the motion carried.

[*English*]

I wish to inform the House that because of the proceedings on the time allocation motion, government orders will be extended by 30 minutes.

● (1130)

SECOND READING

The House resumed from May 9 consideration of the motion that Bill C-15, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 22, 2016 and other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Resuming debate. The hon. member for Cloverdale—Langley City has five minutes remaining in his time for debate.

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Mr. John Aldag (Cloverdale—Langley City, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in continuing to address Bill C-15, it is not every day that I begin by speaking about feminine hygiene products. However, the redressing of unequal taxation of essential goods is an important issue for all Canadians. Currently, feminine hygiene products are subject to GST and HST as goods that are considered to be non-essential. I think we can all agree that this is a misguided policy, and if not sexist, it at least is based entirely outside the experience of Canadians. I am proud to say that Bill C-15 would rectify this disproportionate taxation of women by removing the GST-HST on feminine hygiene products.

The next measure of budget 2016 that I will address is division 2 at part 4, which amends the Canadian Forces Members and Veterans Re-establishment and Compensation Act. I wish to highlight five key improvements.

First, the bill would replace the permanent impairment allowance with the career impact allowance to better support veterans who have had their career options limited by a service-related illness or injury.

Second, it would increase the percentage in the formula used to calculate the earnings loss benefit. This benefit would provide income replacement of 90% of gross pre-release military salary for injured veterans who are participating in a Veterans Affairs Canada rehabilitation or vocational assistance program for those who have injuries preventing them from suitable and gainful employment. The benefit would also keep up with inflation and not be capped at 2% indexation.

Third, the act would specify when a disability award becomes payable and clarify the formula used to calculate the amount of a disability award.

Fourth, the disability award would be indexed to inflation, in line with other new veterans charter benefits, and higher awards would be paid retroactively to all veterans who have received an award since the introduction of the new veterans charter in 2006.

Fifth, the act would also improve the Last Post Fund to provide financial assistance to the estates of eligible deceased veterans toward the cost of burial and funeral services. The estate exemption for families of low-income veterans would also be increased from roughly \$12,000 to \$35,000.

Canada's veterans deserve our care, compassion, and respect. The above measures would greatly improve income support to disabled veterans, including both veterans transitioning to the civilian workforce and those with injuries preventing them from suitable and gainful employment.

However, our government's support for veterans does not stop there. Over the next year, in consultation with the veterans community, the government will work to find a way to better streamline and simplify the system of financial support programs currently offered by Veterans Affairs Canada and National Defence for veterans and their families.

In addition to helping young Canadians, middle-class families, and our respected veterans, the government is committed to supporting Canada's seniors.

Single seniors are at nearly three times the risk of living at a lower income than seniors generally, which is why budget 2016 aims to increase the single rate of the guaranteed income supplement for the lowest-income pensioners by up to \$947 annually. This enhancement would more than double the current maximum guaranteed income supplement top-up benefit and would represent a 10% increase in the total maximum guaranteed income supplement benefits available to the lowest-income single seniors.

Additionally, budget 2016 will repeal section 2.2 of the Old Age Security Act, which increases the age of eligibility to receive old age security and guaranteed income supplement benefits from 65 to 67. This is a good move.

Budget 2016 also addresses a concern that some of my constituents have brought forward, which is additional support for senior couples living apart. Many times senior couples have to live apart for reasons beyond their control, including long-term health care, which results in higher costs of living and an increased risk of living in poverty. The current system provides recipients with guaranteed income supplement benefits based on their individual incomes. However, budget 2016 would extend this treatment so that couples also receive allowance benefits.

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 to the middle class. When we have an economy that works for the middle class, we have a country that works for everyone.

Budget 2016 reflects a new approach for the government, one that offers immediate help to those who need it most and sets the course for growth for all Canadians. With the implementation of budget 2016, the Government of Canada is investing for the years and decades to come. We are investing for our seniors, our veterans, our children, and grandchildren, so that we all may enjoy a more prosperous and hopeful Canada.

● (1135)

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his intervention on this very important bill, and would like to ask him a question with respect to the current situation of limiting debate.

I would also like to first pay tribute to Judy Wasylycia-Leis, who was in Parliament for many years as a New Democrat, for pushing for the elimination of taxes on women's hygiene products and for her ongoing efforts basically going back to the early 1990s. She deserves a lot of credit for what is finally taking place here today.

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I would like to ask the member this. With respect to the budget bill and the time allocation that has been put on it, why is it necessary, when spending almost \$200 billion in this budget, to limit debate to only a few mere hours? Would it not be a healthier and more wholesome debate if members from all ridings were allowed to participate in the House and chamber? The current circumstances eliminate that.

Mr. John Aldag: Mr. Speaker, as we heard this morning, Canadians have been talking about what is in the budget since the beginning of the campaign. We were elected to bring forward the many commitments included in Bill C-15. There has been a lot of discussion. Members have been talking about this over the last couple of days. Our government feels it is time to move forward with the implementation of the bill and the very important measures contained in it.

We made promises, such as the Canada child benefit, that are very important to Canadians. My constituents are looking forward to that. We need the bill in place so we can start paying those benefits to Canadians in July. Therefore, I support moving forward with the vote to get this bill in place.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am very disappointed that closure has been invoked on this bill. I did some research on the past traditions of parliament and in a 40-year period, closure was invoked 7 times. Unfortunately, under the previous government, in a four-year period, closure was invoked 100 times. I had hoped that in this new Parliament we would not see the use of closure, and I certainly hope it will be rare. I lament its use in this case because I do not see the urgency. We should be debating this properly.

Given that some measures in the bill are eagerly awaited and others could take their time, is there any one particular item that requires the risk of bringing back to this place a routine use of a measure that is an affront to democratic debate in Parliament?

Mr. John Aldag: Mr. Speaker, as I noted, there has been discussion on the items contained within the budget. For me, a really critical piece is the Canada child benefit. My understanding is that the legislation needs to be passed for that program to roll out.

In my riding of Cloverdale—Langley City, during the campaign and right through until today, the number one issue I keep hearing about is the cost of living for Canadians and trying to ahead, particularly families with young children. This bill would do great things for families that are struggling to make ends meet, or that want to put their kids in activities.

We need to move forward with the discussion, the vote on the bill, and the implementation of it, so we can get the funds flowing to families that need it the most.

• (1140)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak to Bill C-15, although this is the third time we have had a gag order imposed on us. I consider myself lucky to be able to speak in the House, considering the limited time we have left to debate it.

The first gag order was imposed when we were debating the bill to amend the Air Canada Public Participation Act, which was an attack on aerospace workers. In that instance, not one Bloc Québécois member was able to speak, since we did not even make it to the 34th round of debate. I therefore plan to use my time wisely.

The first point I want to raise regarding Bill C-15 has to do with tax havens. The government prides itself on having made a significant investment of \$444 million to go after tax cheats and crooks who use tax havens. Unfortunately, the problem of tax havens cannot be considered part of the criminal underworld. The problem is that using tax havens is actually legal.

The changes were made by regulation. We have \$200 billion in Canadian investment assets in the 10 main tax havens, including \$80 billion in the largest tax haven, Barbados. It seems like the government is pulling out all the stops to fix a leaky faucet when it should be focusing on the water heater that exploded.

I would add that the government knows a thing or two about tax havens. For example, the Minister of Finance has a company that has subsidiaries in the Bahamas and in Delaware. The minister also helped draft the regulations for the insurance industry in the Bahamas, Belize, Grenada, and Turks and Caicos. These are all tax havens that might attract Canadian and Quebec insurers who want to avoid paying taxes.

The government members have a thorough understanding of how tax havens work and of this problem. They should be generous and share their knowledge with the government in order to resolve this problem.

In fact, the former associate of the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, whom he knows very well, also has dealings in the tax havens, in Turks and Caicos. The Liberals' vast knowledge of tax havens is nothing new. Hon. members will recall the story of former finance minister Paul Martin and his ships that are registered in the Antilles.

I call on the Liberals to use their knowledge to help the House fix the problem of tax havens. The crooks are not the problem. The problem is that the legislation and regulations were changed without the House ever addressing the issue or having a vote on the matter. I urge the government and its members to fix the problem of tax havens.

Bill C-15 contains 75 pages of amendments to the Income Tax Act and its regulations. However, it does not contain any measures to address the regulatory issue, even though there is much to be done. The government already knows that, so I urge it to take action.

Otherwise, the members of the Bloc Québécois will vote against Bill C-15 for other reasons. There is the matter of tax havens, but there are also many other problems as well. Bill C-15 is 177 pages long. We read it carefully and conducted a detailed analysis. The bill is nothing new. It repeats what was announced in the budget, which we also carefully examined.

The budget and Bill C-15 do not meet Quebec's specific needs. There is nothing for cities to help leading-edge sectors, so the budget and Bill C-15 do not support Quebec's urban areas. There is also nothing for rural areas, agriculture, forestry, or the fishery. Land use, economic activity, and regional jobs are important to us. The government should have taken concrete action in that regard.

There is also nothing or very little for unemployed workers, those who have been shut out of the job market. For example, the time limit extensions and enhanced measures target oil regions and exclude Quebec. We were very unhappy and disappointed with that. The budget and Bill C-15 are particularly focused on infrastructure investments, but these investments are not well-thought-out.

•(1145)

There is a funding model that can be used to quickly and efficiently transfer money to Quebec and the municipalities, and that is the gas tax. During the election campaign, the government announced that it would do that. What is actually happening? Three-quarters of the funding announced will come from the old building Canada fund. Members will remember that it took 27 months, or more than two years, to create a framework agreement. People argued about the size of billboards, for example. On average it took another 15 months per project to obtain authorizations. There were discussions about the size of the flag, or they wanted this or that.

Huge investments have been announced, but they will represent a significant amount of debt. Taxpayers in every province, and also in Quebec, will have to pay down that debt. In exchange, we should at the very least have quick access to the money borrowed in order to put it to good use and launch infrastructure programs as quickly as possible.

During the election campaign, the government made a commitment to do that. In Bill C-15, in the budget, the government is going back on its word. That is very disappointing. That is one of the things that I deplore.

Once again, I was very disappointed about the money for community, social, cultural, and sports infrastructure. The money allocated for these types of infrastructure was incorporated into the propaganda funding for Canada's 150th anniversary. The amount is two times higher than the amount for the sponsorship program, and who could forget that scandal. We have to wonder about these members' memories. They are falling back into their old patterns.

The transfers and funding for health care, education, and social services in this budget are also disgraceful. These are services provided by the provinces. There are huge needs in Quebec, and this is evident in my riding and across the province. There are huge needs. These days, it is all about austerity measures. The Government of Quebec is suffocating, as are the other provinces. They have no breathing room, because that breathing room is here, in the House.

The government must restore the health transfers to at least one-quarter of funding. I remind members that in the 1970s, Ottawa funded half of health care spending. Now, we are seeing never-ending cuts, and transfers will drop as low as 18%. Health transfers need to be increased by 6% a year, so that they cover one-quarter of

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funding. That is the least we can do. The public is getting fewer services. Things are not going well. There are problems.

The same goes for social services and education. The government needs to play catch-up to get back to where we were in the 1990s before the brutal cuts were made.

I briefly mentioned employment insurance earlier. Extensions apply only to certain regions. These measures are not unilateral, and Quebec is being left out. That brings me to the problem of black holes.

Workers are not seasonal; jobs are. Workers do not work enough hours in the summer. They collect their benefits for a period of time, and after that, they have nothing to live on. When people rely on employment insurance for their income, they do not have enough money to save up so they can make it through the black hole. This is a great injustice that must be put right.

The same goes for the employment insurance fund. Why is it still part of the public purse? It is not separate. Over the past year, the government has siphoned \$1.7 billion out of the employment insurance fund and spent that money elsewhere on other programs.

Employment insurance is not insurance anymore. It is a tax on work. Not even four out of 10 workers who lose their jobs have access to EI. It is not insurance. It is a tax. For women, only one in three workers has access to employment insurance; two out of three are excluded. For young people, it is even worse. Employment insurance is no longer really playing its role as insurance, providing people with a transition period to turn around and find new work. It is a tax on work. It is deplorable.

I am running out of speaking time, but I still have a lot to say on the innovation economy. Canada falls short when it comes to measures for business research. Quebec depends on that. We have high technology. Quebec's needs are not met in Bill C-15 and the budget. That is why we are voting against the bill.

•(1150)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is a lot in the budget implementation bill that Canadians want to see. Through the budget implementation bill, the Canada child benefit will be enhanced, and this will lift thousands of children out of poverty. For so many years, we have heard about the need to support our seniors. The proposed increase to the guaranteed income supplement will substantially support seniors on fixed incomes who need the top-up. It will be hundreds of additional dollars. These programs are going to take effect starting July 1. Bill C-15 is a progressive piece of legislation that will meet the social concerns of Canadians, along with a great deal more.

Would the member not acknowledge that a great number of Canadians will benefit from the passage of the budget implementation bill?

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[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

I agree completely that there are some good things in the budget. It is not all black or all white. We always have to look at the grey areas. We believe that the most essential elements are missing, but it does contain some good measures.

We completely agree that the new family allowance will have a positive and real impact on families. We asked that it be tax-free, and it is, which is fantastic.

The same can be said of improvements to the guaranteed income supplement, a cause that has been important to the Bloc Québécois for quite some time. We have been asking for this since 2007, so we are very pleased to see it in Bill C-15.

We visited seniors all over Quebec. We moved five opposition day motions in the House. We got the Quebec National Assembly to pass two unanimous resolutions on this issue. Now it is included in the budget and Bill C-15. We are very pleased about that.

The budget contains other good measures, such as reinstating the tax credit for labour-sponsored funds, which will help innovative small businesses. It contains some good measures.

However, as for the essentials, the needs of Quebec, particularly concerning health transfers, how infrastructure investments are transferred, employment insurance, innovation, and tax havens, the Liberals have missed the boat, and that is what we are denouncing here in the House. I hope all that will be restored.

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech.

I am glad that he mentioned that it was a privilege for him to rise in the House to speak to this issue. In my opinion, Quebecers who thought they were voting for change by voting Liberal must be disappointed.

This government claims that it wants to be open and transparent, but the fact that it introduced an omnibus bill followed by a gag order clearly shows that nothing has changed. We are in the same boat we were in for the past 10 years while the Conservatives were in office.

I am also glad that my colleague spoke about the problem of tax havens because, by forgoing that revenue, the government is not playing its role as a distributor of wealth. We know that the gap between the rich and poor is widening. The 100 richest Canadians now hold as much wealth as the bottom 10 million combined.

Is the government failing to do as much as it could because it is forgoing this revenue?

Yes, the government is helping seniors, but it could have done a lot more. The government introduced measures to help lift seniors out of poverty, but it could have done a lot more in terms of employment insurance and support for regional economic development, particularly support for SMEs and innovation.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot for her question and her

excellent comments. We completely agree that the government could have gone a lot farther.

Tax havens are the elephant in the room. The poor, the middle class, and even the upper middle class do not have a lot of breathing room. They are paying more and more and receiving fewer and fewer services. Money is getting tighter and tighter for some of these people, while special rules apply only to the wealthiest 1% or even 0.1%, who are ragging the puck, as they say.

That needs to change. It is not fair. The government could do a lot more. For example, Canadians who are eligible for the guaranteed income supplement should receive it automatically.

● (1155)

Mr. Yves Robillard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, although the budget was tabled in March, I rise today in the House to add my voice to those who have already praised it.

I would like to start by taking a moment to once again thank the people of Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, who put their trust in me. As I rise today, I am well aware that because of them, I have the privilege of representing them here in the House. Like all of my fellow MPs, I worked diligently and tirelessly in my riding to earn my seat here in the House. Of course, I did not take this long journey alone, and I had the help of many absolutely wonderful people. First and foremost, I got into politics because I am motivated by my constituents, who make me so proud and energize me. I am committed to helping them and representing them.

During my very first speech in the House, I said that my riding, Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, was enriched by its people. I was blessed to witness these riches myself when I had the pleasure of being invited back home to Laval to celebrate the noteworthy birthdays of two vivacious women in my riding. These young centenarians are living proof of the essence and spirit of Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, and their smiles are still contagious at 101 and 102 years old.

[*English*]

The Prime Minister and the government are committed to improving the quality of life for seniors, such as these two illustrious ladies from my riding who have seen this country grow through the years. Earlier this year, my hon. colleague, the member for Yukon, mentioned that one grades the success and efficiency of a country by how it treats its most vulnerable.

[*Translation*]

The government's budget helps build our society brick by brick. We are working on making our society one that looks after our seniors and the most vulnerable.

We should keep in mind the following Greek proverb: "A society grows great when old men plant trees whose shade they know they shall never sit in." It is right and just. However, we can provide our mothers and fathers with the support they deserve. It is imperative that we treat our seniors with dignity and respect, as that is what everyone deserves.

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Our government believes that this requires more than just talk, and that is why we are opting for real measures. For example, speaking of seniors' dignity, I would remind the House that the government, under the leadership of the Prime Minister, made a commitment in budget 2016 to return the eligibility age for old age security and the guaranteed income supplement to 65 rather than leaving it at 67. The previous government had increased the eligibility age from 65 to 67. Because of this shameful and prejudicial measure, our seniors, the oldest and most vulnerable members of our society were going to be hit hard and could have lost up to \$28,000.

Today, the government, under the Prime Minister's leadership, has a different and forward-looking vision, one that also puts seniors at the centre of these priorities. Instead of taking away money they earned after contributing to the community for years, our budget 2016 will return the eligibility age for old age security and the guaranteed income supplement to 65.

● (1200)

Our government pledged to provide seniors with a secure, dignified retirement. This measure will give Canadians thousands of dollars once they become seniors. We will also increase the guaranteed income supplement by \$947 per year for the most vulnerable seniors living alone. That is nearly \$1,000 that will go directly into the pockets of the most vulnerable, who were, unfortunately, the first to be forgotten in the past. This measure amounts to over \$670 million per year and will improve the financial security of 900,000 seniors living alone across Canada.

Nine hundred thousand seniors in Laval, in Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, and all over Canada can count on the federal government, which cares about their well-being. This government will uphold its end of the social contract stating that people who have made a life-long, honourable contribution to society should be able to relax and enjoy their golden years without constantly worrying about ending up penniless.

My colleagues and I and everyone working every day on the Hill have been pleased to see the nice weather and the return of spring and warmer days. We cannot look out at the green lawn in front of Parliament without seeing young people gathering together and having a nice time. Those young people who come out in the nice weather to the seat of Canadian democracy are part of that contract. They look forward to working and contributing to our society. We must respect their future and respect our seniors who once upon a time were the young people spending time in front of this place. We must assure these people that they will not have to be concerned about not having enough money. We must give them hope and peace of mind in their old age. When they come back to visit their Parliament, these older men and women who used to come and play here should not come back feeling bitter about this place, but feeling joyful and grateful.

For the young people and seniors of the past, present, and future, our society has to head in that direction. That is what our government promised, and thanks to budget 2016, we can proclaim loud and clear that our government took action.

[*English*]

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member wants accurate information, and he knows that

the previous Conservative government did not raise the age to 67. In fact, that was going to be implemented in 2020. I know he wants to ensure that is correct information.

The member mentioned very eloquently the trust of his constituents and how they and Canadians across the country have given him trust. I want to ask the member if he can comment on how his constituents feel about there having been a promise during the election of a \$10-billion deficit and that it is now three times that amount with no plan for a balanced budget.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Robillard: Mr. Speaker, I need not answer that question because the budget is clear: we are here for our seniors.

I can assure hon. members that in my riding every senior will benefit from this very logical and well-received measure.

● (1205)

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: It seems that the interpretation was not working there.

[*Translation*]

Could the hon. member for Marc-Aurèle-Fortin repeat the last 30 seconds of his comments?

Mr. Yves Robillard: Mr. Speaker, I was saying that naturally, contrary to what members across the way think, the seniors in Marc-Aurèle-Fortin are very happy with the measures that our government is putting in place. They will benefit all seniors throughout Canada and not just those in Marc-Aurèle-Fortin.

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech in the House today.

In his remarks, he talked about the budget and the importance of supporting seniors and young people. However, the budget tabled by the Liberal government makes no mention whatsoever of agriculture, and yet we all know how important agriculture is to the Canadian economy.

The previous Conservative government had promised funding, specifically \$4.3 billion in compensation for the dairy and poultry industries in light of certain trade agreements. This compensation is really important.

However, the budget tabled by the Liberal government makes no mention whatsoever of agriculture or compensation for those industries.

I would like the member for Marc-Aurèle-Fortin to comment on that.

Mr. Yves Robillard: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

My speech this morning was really about seniors all across Canada. This does not mean that I do not support measures for farmers and measures in other areas.

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Today I simply wanted to emphasize the support that we are providing to our seniors. This measure represents an investment of over \$670 million a year. It will improve the financial security of about 900,000 seniors across Canada and lift 13,000 seniors out of poverty.

[*English*]

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is a reason why my hon. colleague across the floor does not want to answer that and wants to focus on the seniors. Again, he did not answer my hon. colleague about the agriculture.

Another string of broken promises is what we are seeing with the Liberal government. The Liberals campaigned on following through with what our Conservative government laid the groundwork for, lowering small business tax to 9%, and indeed, when they got into power, they decided they would keep it at 10.5%.

My question is this. Why is the government so keyed in on punishing small business? The parliamentary budget officer just tabled a report that this would cost millions in GDP and thousands of jobs throughout Canada. The Liberals are negligent toward small business, and I am wondering why they are punishing small business owners.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Robillard: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question.

It is important to understand that not only has the Minister of Finance often talked about it, but it is also included in the budget. I would ask the members to reread the budget. Maybe then they will change their minds and support it.

[*English*]

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise today to speak to the bill. I have spoken on the budget in the past, but the budget implementation act is something that I am going to address right now.

I will say at the onset that one of the things that came out of the last election was the fact that all Canadians have a voice in this place. Every single member, all 338 of us, we have the opportunity to use our voices to speak on behalf of our constituents.

Not being a part of the previous government, I understand that there were some procedural manoeuvres that were made, but the fact that the Liberals today have invoked closure on this debate has caused me, as the representative for Barrie—Innisfil, great concern.

As a new member of Parliament, I go back to something that the hon. member for Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte said this morning, and it relates to the throne speech. I think it is worth repeating at the outset of my comments that, in the throne speech, the Liberals stated that:

In this Parliament, all members will be honoured, respected and heard, wherever they sit. For here, in these chambers, the voices of all Canadians matter.

Let us not forget, however, that Canadians have been clear and unambiguous in their desire for real change. Canadians want their government to do different things, and to do things differently....

Through careful consideration and respectful conduct, the Government can meet these challenges, and all others brought before it.

By working together in the service of all Canadians, the Government can make real change happen.

Well, what hypocrisy that today, a lot like in the medically assisted dying debate, the Liberals would invoke closure and not allow Canadians to have a voice on this and the previous bill. I am fortunate to be able to rise on behalf of my constituents, as I was not given the opportunity to speak on medically assisted dying because of that debate being closed.

I want to focus, in the short time I have, on three things. One is what I referred to, in previous comments I have made in the House, as the middle-class tax fraud, or the reduction of the middle class in terms of tax implementation; the shell game that the Liberals are playing. I want to use some very specific examples of that.

The second thing is the innovation sector. I want to speak specifically on that, given the fact that Startup Canada was here last week and I had some very productive meetings, as did my colleagues. I want to speak on behalf of the innovation sector.

The third thing, if I have time, is infrastructure.

As it relates to the middle-class tax fraud, what we are seeing in the budget is that what the Liberals give, the Liberals take back. I use the example of the child care benefit. I would classify a firefighter and a nurse with a combined income of roughly \$180,000 as middle class in this country. They actually would be worse off because of the child care benefit. In fact, under the Conservative plan, that same firefighter and nurse would have received almost \$240 a month, but under the current Liberal plan, they would only receive \$112 a month. In fact, those we could classify as middle-class Canadians would actually be worse off. Granted, there would be some Canadians who were better off, but I think the majority of Canadians, or a large part of Canadians, would actually see less.

What is also disturbing with this shell game that the Liberals are playing with the budget is that we have heard the talking points, we have heard the Minister of Finance stand up in this House and talk about nine million Canadians and all of the rhetoric that goes with it, but there are certain facts in the budget that prove that this is a middle-class tax fraud.

The fact is that the fitness tax credit would be removed. Since 2006, Canadians have benefited to the tune of \$1.13 billion in tax relief. Since 2011, there was the arts and activity tax credit, from which Canadians have benefited to the extent of \$190 million; and income splitting would be gone for Canadians, at \$2,000 a year. As I said earlier, what the Liberals give, the Liberals take back.

What are middle-class Canadians getting for that in this shell game? They are getting burdened with deficit and debt, not unlike my home province of Ontario. We are seeing services cut and taxes go up, and it is just an inevitability.

Government Orders

•(1210)

I know that the finance minister and the Prime Minister have stood up and said that now is the time to invest in infrastructure, and saddle on some burden and debt. There is never a good time for that. In fact, when I was in Washington recently at the National Governors Association conference, some of the top economists in that country were talking about a pending recession.

They were saying that we are actually six years into what is normally a five-year cycle for recession. When that happens, and when we are being crippled with debt, it is going to be awfully difficult, if we do enter into that recession—and this is why governments need to plan ahead—to do what we need to do to take care of the most vulnerable in our country, including many within the middle class.

Last week, as I mentioned earlier, Startup Canada was in town. Many of us in this chamber actually met with them. I had the opportunity to meet with the person I would consider is one of the brightest micro-entrepreneurs in this country, Chad Ballantyne, and his wife, Sandra. They talked a lot about the innovation agenda.

I asked Chad, if he had a couple of minutes to speak to Canadians, what he would say to them. Chad wrote me a long email, and I would like to share some of what Chad said. He said:

[The] Prime Minister...charged his leadership to "develop an Innovation Agenda that includes: expanding effective support for incubators, accelerators... These investments will target key growth sectors where Canada has the ability to attract investment or grow export-oriented companies."

Startup Canada would merit a seat at the table when the advisory council for the innovation agenda is established. Startup Canada, with its vision of an innovation nation, has in place the only nationwide network to support, nurture, and educate entrepreneurs as they launch and build their companies.

Startup communities, like ours in Barrie, Ontario, are the connective tissue bringing together the entire entrepreneurship community, ensuring the healthy functioning and optimization of an economic and social ecosystem supporting every entrepreneur.

Startup also feels that an innovation agenda should include the entire startup ecosystem and ensure that it does not become too narrowly focused. The agenda proposes pouring investment into a handful of clusters. This is too narrow a focus, and limits the investment opportunity to only later-stage enterprises and R and D tech sectors, and ignores the early-stage startups in service-based companies, which are the foundation of our economic engine in Canada.

There is little, if any, funding for these communities in this budget, and companies that are post R and D, despite their sector focus, recommend to fund innovation throughout the entire ecosystem and support the more than 150,000 people who are a part of micro-entrepreneurs, the startup communities in this country.

Last, on the issue of infrastructure, I know a lot has been said with respect to infrastructure. I said this earlier, when I was speaking on the budget, and we heard it earlier today from the Bloc Québécois member. The easiest way to make sure that infrastructure money flows out that door is to do something with the gas tax, either double it or triple it.

The Liberals have put billions toward infrastructure. One of the things they said during the campaign was that infrastructure was not effectively a Liberal issue, a Conservative issue, or an NDP issue; it was a Canadian issue. The purest, fairest, and simplest way, in order to ensure that communities across this country get what they need in terms of infrastructure with criteria that are already in place, is to make sure we use the gas tax formula as a means to do it.

Over the last couple of weeks and months, we have been seeing a lot of announcements by the Liberal Party in Liberal-held ridings. We need to make sure the money gets to communities that need it. It does not matter whether it is Cariboo—Prince George, Nanaimo—Ladysmith, or Barrie—Innisfil; there is a need across this country, and using the gas tax formula to provide infrastructure funding, to me as a former city councillor, is the purest and only way to ensure fairness and transferability in that system.

•(1215)

In the past, the member for Spadina—Fort York has said that municipalities have used the gas tax funding to decrease taxes in their municipalities. I have not seen any evidence of that at all.

•(1220)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in addressing the budget, the member brought up the really important issue of investing in Canada's infrastructure. He made reference to his previous role as a councillor. I agree it is important to recognize that Canada has a great deal of infrastructure that needs to be worked on and improved. That is why we will find that not only does the budget have the largest amount of money being allocated toward infrastructure but we are looking at investing today in Canada's infrastructure.

The member understands the importance of getting the money to the different communities. I am sure he would agree that by investing in Canada's infrastructure we are, in essence, building a healthier and more robust economy, because often infrastructure feeds into economic activity in creating opportunities for Canada's middle class and beyond.

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Speaker, when we look at the budget and the deficit that is being created, a lot of it goes to ongoing programs. Again, it comes back to the shell game.

As a former city councillor, I can speak to the infrastructure deficit. I was chair of the infrastructure committee, so I know full well what the infrastructure deficit was in the city of Barrie, and it kept growing every year. There is no question that an infrastructure investment is required. In fact, the previous government made significant infrastructure investments.

What I am talking about is not politicizing the fact that these infrastructure investments need to be made in communities. There is only one way to not politicize that, and that is to use the gas tax formula.

Government Orders

For example, the City of Barrie receives \$1.8 million a year in gas tax money. If we doubled or even tripled that, it could improve the transit system in my city by being able to purchase six buses. It does not politicize the process. It gets the money to where it needs to go so that all of Canada can benefit from infrastructure investments, not just Liberal ridings.

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for the hard work he is doing in terms of industry and innovation.

In his speech he talked about another program that is being impacted by the budget bill. That is the children's fitness tax credit. I remember when the previous government brought in that tax credit in 2006. It was a huge benefit to my wife and me. We had a child in hockey, a daughter in volleyball, and another daughter in dance. I know how much that children's fitness tax credit meant to us as a low middle-income family.

As I was going around my riding this past election telling constituents that not only would we protect the children's fitness tax credit but we would double it to \$1,000 per child, the feedback I got was overwhelming. It was absolutely phenomenal how many people were in support of that, how many people took advantage of it, and how important they felt it was to ensure that their kids remained healthy and active and could participate in some of these programs.

This is a program that benefited every single Canadian family with children. I would like to ask my colleague what he feels the impact is going to be on Canadian families and our children by eliminating the children's fitness tax credit.

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Speaker, my family is the epitome of a middle-class family. I have four kids and a beautiful wife. All of them have been active in sports. We have, as a middle-class family, used that fitness tax credit to our advantage. In the overall scheme of things, it may not have been much, maybe a \$150 tax credit, but multiply that by four children and that meant \$600 in tax relief for my family.

As I said in my presentation, the fitness tax credit since 2006 has benefited Canadian families to the tune of \$1.13 billion. That is \$1.13 billion that those families have been able to use to put their kids in sports.

From a fitness and health standpoint, we as members of Parliament should be encouraging families, not discouraging them by taking away these types of credits to put their kids into physical activities, because that physical activity helps in the overall health and wellness of the children of our country.

• (1225)

Mr. Robert Morrissey (Egmont, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is indeed an honour and a pleasure for me to rise in the House today as the newly elected member of Parliament for Egmont to speak to Bill C-15.

Before I get to my comments on the budget, I want to acknowledge the situation that is occurring in our sister province of Alberta, primarily the community of Fort McMurray. After all, the oil industry of Alberta and Saskatchewan is the single biggest employer in my riding. We depend on this part of Canada for a lot of the jobs that are created there.

I want to acknowledge as well that islanders will be there to support the community of Fort McMurray in its time of need. We are a generous society; Canadians in general are generous, and we all reach out to those in Fort McMurray.

For the last number of weeks, since the budget was introduced, I have listened intently to the debate in the House and to questions in question period. I have listened to opposition members rail on at length with their comments on the government's deficit budget. Listening to their newfound concerns and their degree of anxiety over the deficit budget, I chose to take a look at the fiscal track record of former governments over the past number of years.

It is interesting to look back at the fiscal situation over a number of years in this country. In particular, I looked back to 1994-95, which was the first year of a new Liberal administration, following nine years of a Conservative government in this country. In 1994-95, the debt-to-GDP ratio was near 70%, after nine years of Conservative rule. By 2006, at the end of roughly 12 years of a Liberal administration, the debt-to-GDP ratio had been reduced to below 30%. Shortly after, the debt-to-GDP ratio under a new Conservative government began to climb, and climbed to over 30%, the number where it is today. When I compared the fiscal situation that was inherited by a Liberal government in 1993-94 and the fiscal track record of the previous Conservative government, we can see how the debt-to-GDP ratio ballooned under that particular government.

I wanted to look more specifically at the past years of the former Conservative government, now the opposition. In 2006-07, the government inherited a surplus of \$13.8 billion, adjusted to \$16.2 billion. In 2007-08, the surplus was at \$9.6 billion, but by 2008-09, the Conservative government began to run a deficit of \$5.8 billion in 2008-09. In 2009-10, it was \$55.6 billion, adjusted to \$61.27 billion. In 2010-11, it was \$33 billion, adjusted to \$36 billion. In 2011-12, it was \$26 billion to \$27 billion. In 2012-13, it was \$18 billion. In 2013-14, it was \$5 billion.

Obviously, the comments now coming from the opposition party, which was the government at the time, clearly show that the government they were a part of had no problem running deficits in this country, in fact sizeable deficits. I am told, but I could be corrected, that the deficit accumulated over that period of time was one of the largest this country incurred in any particular period.

• (1230)

Where are we today? Our party was honest and frank with Canadians during the election. We indicated that given the deteriorating fiscal situation, it was unlikely that in government we would be able to run a surplus. We indicated that given the fiscal situation at the time and the information our party had, we would anticipate a deficit in the \$10-billion range in order to implement the programs that we wanted to implement.

My colleague the member of Parliament for Cumberland—Colchester gave me some good research material which indicates that with the drop in the price of oil per barrel, the federal treasury has lost in the vicinity of \$18 billion since late last summer until now.

Government Orders

As a government we could have done a number of things. We could have reined in spending to do away with that deficit, but that would have forced us to abandon a number of the programs that we campaigned on, that we believed in, and that we felt this country needed.

I firmly believe that the government's fundamental role is to address the needs of the most vulnerable. For too many years this area has been neglected and significant effort will need to be made to address these matters. Over the last 30 years, Canadians at the top 0.1% have seen their income rise by about 155% and some 90% of Canadians have seen their income rise by only 33% over the same time frame. Clearly something had to change.

The platform that I was most proud to run on as a candidate in the last election and a key part of the budget that I am proud to support and defend is our position on the child benefit. The child benefit is simpler, fairer, tax-free, and targeted to those who need it the most, low-income and middle-income families. It is also much more generous than the former program. I can relate to one family in my riding that would benefit significantly by this program. There are 5,111 children enrolled in the school system in Egmont. The average family will benefit by \$2,300. There are 4,150 families in my riding of Egmont. This adds up to \$9.545 million for my constituency alone, which is a small constituency.

What had an impact on me the most during the election campaign was the financial distress that single seniors were feeling. As a candidate, that really had an impact on me. I was surprised at the extent of the financial hardship faced by single seniors, the majority of whom are women.

Our commitment to not only increase the GIS by 10% but to restore the age of eligibility to 65 is a significant component of our budget. I want to quote a fact. According to researchers at Laval University, the Conservative plan would have increased the number of 65-year-olds and 66-year-olds living below the poverty line from 6% to 17%. We in the Liberal Party felt that was unacceptable. We feel that we owe this segment of our population a reasonable living.

I am proud of these two significant changes that would be brought about by the passage of the budget. When the budget is implemented, people will see the benefits.

•(1235)

I want to close on another area where we have seen significant reform. At the same time, I will be a bit critical of my own government. This has to do the changes we have made to the employment insurance system. As a government, we should always target changes to address the most vulnerable in society. On this measure, we did not meet the needs of the short-term seasonal workers in my riding by extending their benefit period. We did it for some parts of the country, which I applaud. We made a lot of significant improvements to the system. However, on this one area, I feel we have a lot more work to do. I look forward to continuing the work on those issues in the coming sessions of Parliament and budgets.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to clear up a few rather disingenuous comments made by my colleague with respect to past history.

The truth is that the Mulroney government inherited a massive deficit from the Liberal government. The deficits it ran were solely due to interest payments. It actually had a balanced operations budget. When the Liberals took over after that, they continued massive spending only until they hit a debt wall. They then balanced the budget on the backs of massive health care cuts to Canadians and to our military. Therefore, that is not a record on which I would run. Our previous government then balanced the budget, including the increases to health care.

The member across the way made a comment about the election campaign and his government being "honest and frank" about the finances. The Liberals then broke their promise with respect to the deficit. The \$3 billion home health care promise was broken. There is no money in the budget for that. They broke their promise that their tax cuts would be revenue neutral. They broke their promise on cutting taxes for small business.

How is that honest and frank?

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Mr. Speaker, we were the only party that was candid during the elections. Given the fiscal situation we could see at the time, we were unlikely to balance the budget. In fact, we indicated that we would run a deficit that could exceed the \$10 billion range, while the other two mainline parties, the Conservatives and the NDP, said they would balance the budget. Therefore, one would have to ask this question. In order to be at a balanced budget today, given what happened dramatically in the fall, and continues today with the decline in oil prices, in which areas would a Conservative or NDP government make cuts?

We have made it clear that we would invest in Canadians. We have brought in measures, such as a tax cut to the middle class, the child tax benefit, and an increase in seniors pension, all of which are investments in Canadians.

Small businesses need customers with money in their pockets to spend. That is the most important part for a small business. It has to make a profit before it pays taxes. To make a profit, it needs to have customers with money in their pockets and the ability to spend. That is what is most important for small business.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, our colleague spoke with pride about his last election campaign, but I am certain that the voters in his riding who voted for him voted for change and the promise of greater openness and transparency.

Government Orders

We agree that a budget is important. Now, the Liberals have introduced a 179-page omnibus bill. Parliamentarians are being gagged. Given that they were promised change, Canadians were not expecting such an undemocratic move.

The Liberals campaigned in Atlantic Canada and promised real employment insurance reform. However, the Atlantic regions are not among the 12 regions entitled to supplementary unemployment benefits. Can my colleague tell me whether that is what the people of Atlantic Canada were expecting in the way of employment insurance reforms?

• (1240)

[*English*]

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Mr. Speaker, of course we delivered changes to things on which we campaigned. We changed the tax rate for the middle class. We changed the child benefit, which has a significant impact for those most in need. We changed the GIS for single seniors. We changed significant parts of the employment insurance system for the better. We changed the infrastructure program. In fact, we adjusted the criteria that the former government had put in place for the provinces on the east coast as it was impossible for them to spend money and invest in their communities.

I am proud of the changes we have brought in, but we have more work to do in some areas. My hon. colleague will see that in my comments I was equally critical of my own government.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I salute all my colleagues in the House and everyone watching us debate the budget.

We are extremely disappointed with the turn of events. The government wants to muzzle the House and parliamentarians in this very important debate. I will come back to that at the end of my speech.

First of all, this budget is totally irresponsible because it confirms that the government has lost control of public spending and it will be our children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, who are not even born yet, who will have to pay for today's excesses.

On election day, October 19, Canadians spoke. We are democrats and therefore respect their decision. However, what was the state of public finances? The previous government, with the hon. member for Calgary Heritage at the helm, had the best economic performance in the G7. In fact, in economic matters, it won the G7 triple crown. We had the best debt-to-GDP ratio. The current government boasts that it has the best ratio, but members should not forget that we are the ones who generated it.

Second, our country bounced back from the economic crisis of 2008-10 more quickly than any other country. We also had the best job creation rate. Under the former government, Canadians had the lowest taxes in 50 years.

The Department of Finance found that in November, when the Liberals took office, there was a billion-dollar surplus. That is the situation. I am always pleased to quote the Department of Finance's well-known "Fiscal Monitor", which I always have at my fingertips.

We have tried to table it about 50 times, but the Liberals refuse to face the truth.

This is the Canada that the Liberals inherited: a Canada that had a budget surplus, a Canada that had the best debt-to-GDP ratio, and a Canada whose economic performance was recognized around the world as being the best in the G7. What is more, Canadians had the lowest taxes in 50 years. In short, everything was on track, economically speaking.

However, then the Liberals took office and started racking up deficits and debts left and right. Let us look at each of the promises that the Liberals made and broke concerning sound management.

First, let us look at tax changes. The Liberals bragged about wanting to be like Robin Hood by taking from the rich to give to the poor. They said that they wanted to make revenue-neutral tax changes.

They cannot say that anymore because those tax changes resulted in a \$1.7-billion deficit. The money that they promised is money that they do not have. We too want to give money to people. We lowered taxes, but we did it in a realistic and responsible way, and we still managed to balance the books in the previous government's last budget. The Liberals were elected on the promise that they would make tax changes without going into debt, which is completely untrue since the changes that they made resulted in a \$1.7-billion deficit.

The same is true for assistance for children. The Liberals are proud to say that they are thinking about families and children, that they want to bring children out of poverty, and that this will all cost nothing. However, that is not how it works. That is not reality. Their measures resulted in a \$1.4-billion deficit.

They accumulated a \$3-billion debt on these two commitments. That is the irresponsible management we keep hearing about. That is why we think these people have lost all control over public finances and that they are acting in an unrealistic and irresponsible way. It is all well and good to promise the moon and the stars, but you have to have the means. In this case, they do not.

What is most absurd is that the Liberal Party promised small \$10-billion deficits, which have now become big \$30-billion deficits. Not only was this a bad promise, but it also caused a real financial disaster. It was completely unrealistic and irresponsible.

The Liberals did not keep their promise to Canadians. The Liberal Party was elected by promising a small deficit and by saying that they would achieve a balanced budget in three years. This is completely untrue. This year, the deficit is \$30 billion, and who knows if the government will even be able to balance the budget in the next four or five years. Some estimate that our deficit could hit \$150 billion. That is completely unacceptable, unrealistic, and irresponsible for our future generations.

Government Orders

● (1245)

That is why, in this situation, we really have two contradictory visions, specifically the vision of a responsible government that made tough but necessary decisions, compared to the vision of the current government, which is governing as though nothing was wrong, has lost all control over public spending, and plans to compulsively run up deficits, one after the other.

It is not at all pleasant, especially given that this government's budget contains an appalling clause to abolish the Federal Balanced Budget Act. It is completely irresponsible, especially since on page 51 of the budget document, it states, "The government remains committed to returning to balanced budgets, and will do so in a responsible, realistic and transparent way."

Two pages later in the same document, there is a statement saying that the Federal Balanced Budget Act must be repealed. They say one thing, and then two pages later, they say the exact opposite, which is so typical of the Liberals.

What is more, regarding this string of deficits, about two weeks ago, the Minister of Finance, an honourable man who had a distinguished, responsible, and exciting career in the financial world, said that we were stuck in this whole balanced budget thing.

Of course we are stuck on that. That is how to manage things properly. I am very proud to be stuck on balancing the budget. That is the Conservative Party's trademark, and we are very proud of that. Meanwhile, what are they doing on that side of the House? The Liberals are running deficits like mad one after the other, and that is totally unacceptable.

Let us talk about creating wealth. To the Conservative Party, the real creators of wealth are entrepreneurs and small and medium-sized businesses. They are the ones who create employment, wealth, and the necessary economic stimulus.

A government does not create employment. A government needs to support businesses in order to create employment, but not tell them what to do. We respect SMEs, unlike the hon. member for Papineau, the current Prime Minister of Canada, who said not so long ago that the wealthiest Canadians use small businesses to avoid paying taxes. Such behaviour is insulting to those who create employment.

When the Prime Minister said that, he might have been looking in a mirror, because the Prime Minister, the hon. member for Papineau in Quebec, filed his tax return in Ontario in order to save \$6,000 in tax in Quebec. He had four numbered businesses to save on taxes. As the saying goes, "Do as I say, not as I do."

In this case, the Prime Minister could tell us what he did and why he is contemptuous of small businesses, because he thinks that small business owners are people who want to reduce their tax bill. The Conservative Party believes that small business owners are people who risk their own money to create jobs and wealth, and we owe them respect.

What is in this budget for SMEs? Absolutely nothing. If it was simply nothing, it would not be so bad, but things are even worse. In fact, some measures directly attack small businesses. We were on a roll and had promised to reduce the corporate tax rate. Poof, no tax

cut. Our government proposed tax credits to create jobs. Poof, they are abolished.

Consequently, according to the Department of Finance, these bad Liberal measures will cost SMEs another \$2 billion. What I find insulting is that there is no respect for SMEs, there is no help for them, and some measures are detrimental. This Liberal attitude deserves to be condemned.

The same goes for retirement age. Yes it was bold, but it was a realistic and responsible move on the part of our government to raise the retirement age from 65 to 67. Our prime minister made that well-thought-out, responsible choice, and he gave plenty of notice. He announced it in 2011, but it would not have come into effect until 2023. People would have had enough time to adjust.

Who agreed with that measure at the time? The current Minister of Finance. In a book, he wrote: "It would also alleviate any shortages in the workforce due to the aging of the population....Phasing in the eligibility age...from 65 to 67 is a step in that direction".

That is what the current Minister of Finance said before he became a Liberal Party of Canada flag-bearer, unfortunately.

This budget is completely unrealistic and irresponsible, and it plunges us right into a disastrous deficit spiral. It always makes me laugh when Liberals talk about the Right Honourable Paul Martin. Paul Martin hated deficits with a passion. I think it is a bit unseemly of them to mention Paul Martin.

Most of all, we strongly condemn the fact that the government is going to shut down this important debate. Earlier, one of my colleagues pointed out that this is yet another broken throne speech promise. What was it the throne speech said?

It said, "[The government] will not resort to devices like prorogation and omnibus bills to avoid scrutiny". That is exactly what is happening today.

● (1250)

That is why we are going to vote against this budget.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is true that companies need to create jobs and wealth, but the government needs to build trust. The previous Conservative government did not do that.

With regard to the deficit, if the deficit that we announced was any cause for concern, then the financial markets would have reacted negatively. However, they did not react to the announcement of a deficit. Who then is right, the hon. member or the thousands of investors who invest in the financial markets and did not react to the news of a federal budget deficit?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, the reason why the markets reacted positively is that we have the best debt-to-GDP ratio, which was generated by the previous Conservative government. That is why it is too bad that the current government is squandering the financial legacy that we left. I would like to remind the government of that because it is important that we compare ourselves to the best and not just to two or three other countries.

Government Orders

Canada's debt-to-GDP ratio, economic recovery, and rate of job creation were the best in the G7, and Canadians had the lowest taxes in 50 years.

That is the Conservative track record and that is why the economy always did so well under the government led by the right hon. member for Calgary Heritage.

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech.

He referred to the throne speech, but the change announced in that speech was in relation to the previous Conservative government, which kept introducing omnibus bills and imposing gag orders on parliamentarians. I know that my colleague was not a part of that government. As he said, we are democratic. I know how much respect he has for the workings of Parliament and this institution.

Does he not find it strange that the Liberals are perpetuating the Conservative practice of imposing omnibus bills and gag orders?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot. I will not forget the name this time. I have had the great pleasure of working with her on Bill C-14.

Six months ago, Canadians had their say. We are democratic and we respect their choice. If we had been perfect, we would not be on this side of the House. Each government has its own experiences. The reality is that these people got elected by making promises, and now they are doing the complete opposite. That is the reality. These people got elected by promising that there would be a small \$10-billion deficit. How big is the deficit now? It is \$30 billion. They got elected by promising that they would make tax changes without any cost to the public, but those changes will cost \$1.7 billion. These people were elected on a platform, but they are not following through on it.

This is insulting, and it only adds to Canadians' cynicism about politics.

• (1255)

[*English*]

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent for his excellent remarks. I was particularly struck in his remarks by the way he itemized the number of broken promises that this budget represents: the broken promise on a limited deficit, the broken promise to small business owners.

However, among the litany of broken promises that the member referred to, there was one that I will ask if he would care to comment on. A key promise that the Liberals made in the election was a return to a balanced budget, and that promise is completely out the window, without any plan that any of us can see for how we are going to return to a balanced budget.

We now have a structural deficit, as opposed to what most Canadians understood as being perhaps some limited borrowing for infrastructure. Would the member like to comment on the danger of structural deficit and the broken promise of a return to a balanced budget?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, to be clear, and for all the people who are listening to understand, how could they imagine

someone who has \$50,000 as an income spending \$55,000? That person will never achieve that balance.

Year after year, spending more money than we have is irresponsible. Anyone can understand that. Every father, every mother, and every chief of family can understand that if they continue in that way, they will face a wall. If not, they will face the deficit at the end and everything will collapse.

[*Translation*]

However, this is exactly where the government is taking us. Deficits are acceptable in extreme circumstances, but it is completely unrealistic and irresponsible to run a deficit when the economy is doing well. That is living beyond our means.

This reminds me of a question I asked the Minister of Finance, taking him back to the good old days when he was a financial advisor. I asked him what he would do if he had a client who had a household income of \$100,000 but spent \$110,000. Would he tell his client to keep up this lifestyle and that all was well, or would he tell the client to be realistic and responsible and live within his means?

That is exactly what we are telling the government. It needs to live within its means.

[*English*]

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by briefly thanking the government for direct investments in my community of Beaches—East York specifically, with a major investment in Neighbourhood Link, now The Neighbourhood Group, which provides important employment services and settlement services in my community.

The government's first budget invests in productivity, people, and our planet. As a first budget, it follows through on many promises from October's election, from supporting veterans, to making post-secondary education more affordable, to investing in science and innovation, to restoring funding to the CBC, to increasing support for the arts, and to emphasizing data-driven government.

An essential plank of our platform was infrastructure investment. The budget proposes \$3.4 billion for public transit infrastructure over the next three years, and \$2.3 billion for affordable housing initiatives over the next two years.

It was especially encouraging to see \$840 million recently committed to public transit in the city of Toronto. Importantly, the funds will go toward necessary maintenance and upgrades of the existing public transit system, often overlooked and unappreciated, yet critical work.

The commitment to invest in transit based on ridership figures is also important, as it commits our government to data-driven decision-making. More, there is renewed respect for local decision-making, and any unspent funds in a calendar year will be rolled into the gas tax transfer, giving municipalities the certainty of receiving the promised funds, no matter what.

I want to pause here to highlight the fact that the previous government also made significant investments in infrastructure. This is an area where there ought to be consensus in this House.

Government Orders

The budget also makes investments directly in families with children, and directly in seniors. These two investments are of particular note because they expand existing basic income programs. A basic income or guaranteed annual income is not a partisan idea. Those on the traditional left, who fight to end poverty, find common cause with those on the traditional right, who wish to see a less bureaucratic, more efficient administration of the welfare state.

A Canadian example of such cross-partisan advocacy can be found in our Senate. Former Conservative senator Hugh Segal has done much to raise awareness for the problem of poverty and has long called for the prescription of a basic income. Current senator, Art Eggleton, also a long-time poverty awareness advocate, recently put forward a motion calling upon this government to establish a basic income pilot project. The Province of Ontario has heeded that call, and we should do the same.

I commend my colleague from Winnipeg Centre for bringing attention to the House, through the finance committee, the importance of a basic income. Of course, we already know the value of a basic income, a fact that our budget investments recognize through the Canada child benefit and the guaranteed income supplement.

As I said, in December, in my first speech in this House, our Canada child benefit is effectively a basic income for kids and families in need. It will provide a base amount of \$6,400 every year for every child under the age of six, and \$5,400 every year for every child between the ages of six to 17. It is targeted to those families who actually need the help. The more a family earns, the less it gets. In other words, it is fair. As implemented, it will raise hundreds of thousands of children, an estimated 300,000, out of poverty.

Now, there remains room for improvement. For example, the Canada child benefit should be indexed to inflation immediately. It should account for the total number of family members, not only children. As we continue to improve data collection in the future, we should assess whether we can account for differences in living costs between geographic regions within our country.

Still, when 25% of children in Toronto live in poverty, and well over 30% of children in the Crescent Town community in my riding, the Canada child benefit will make a real difference for many.

The guaranteed income supplement for seniors is another iteration of the same idea, with a different target group. The budget will increase GIS by 10%, or up to \$950 more per year. It is estimated that it will mean increased benefits for 900,000 Canadians.

Both programs, the GIS and the CCB, are comprised of a single non-taxable benefit geared to income. As basic income guarantees, they are programs we should continue to build upon. A 2011 National Council of Welfare report tells us that the cost of poverty is greater than the cost of ending poverty. The answer is a basic income guarantee, or programs built on that idea.

As an aside, the cost of poverty is on full display in first nation communities, where we have underinvested in education, infrastructure, and overall support for years. We are witnessing the real costs of turning a blind eye to poverty, isolation, and a lack of opportunities. The budget commits over \$5 billion to first nation

communities over the remainder of our mandate. The investment is an important one, but more resources are required to close the gap.

Finally, the budget invests in clean technologies and sets funds aside for a low-carbon fund. Unfortunately, we are not currently on target to meet our 2°C target.

● (1300)

I have sat in this House since December, wondering how members of the official opposition, committed as they are to free markets, ignore the consensus of economists who have identified carbon pricing as the market-based solution to fighting climate change. We need federal leadership on a carbon price. I am hopeful that a low-carbon fund will be used to provide incentives for provinces to increase their targets. We need to be more ambitious if we are going to meet our commitments in Paris.

My own view is that we should propose a carbon price based on federal privacy legislation. The federal framework, a minimum national carbon price, would apply unless provinces have substantially similar rules, in which case provincial rules would govern.

B.C. has a model for the rest of the country, as it is truly revenue neutral. All funds taken in through the carbon tax are repaid to citizens, lowering the taxes of the majority of the population. A federal framework should start at B.C.'s current level of \$30 per tonne, as proposed by the citizens climate coalition.

Federal action is also required when one looks at the industry exemption that provinces have introduced into their own carbon pricing regimes. Provinces are rightly concerned that a carbon price will lead to increased costs on inputs for Canadian companies and could put certain industries at a competitive disadvantage with international goods. The federal government can resolve this dilemma. Border carbon tax adjustments can be applied on goods from countries without equivalent carbon pricing policies to protect Canadian industries, or at least to ensure a level playing field.

Government Orders

Carbon pricing is necessary, but it is not sufficient. Our focus should also be on innovation. On the World Economic Forum's ranking of performance of countries' innovation, Canada ranks only 22nd. Our clean-tech industry specifically has lost 40% of its global market share over the last decade. Many necessary innovations are coming, such as affordable electric cars, but they are not coming fast enough based purely on market forces.

Government has a role to play, and our innovation agenda will help. We will invest \$1 billion to support clean tech in industries over the next four years, over \$60 million to support deployment of alternative fuels for transportation, \$130 million per year for clean-tech research, and additional millions to support new research chairs in clean and sustainable technology.

We must also focus on improving energy efficiency. Billions will be invested in improving municipal waste-water systems, \$570 million will go toward efficiency retrofits to existing social housing. While new builds can and should be subject to the passive house or net-zero standards, guidelines for retrofits and renovations need to be improved and better standardized.

The budget is not perfect. There is a glaring hole in the health agenda, which I hope will be rectified as a new health accord is negotiated with the provinces. I am a believer in the national seniors strategy, as proposed by the Canadian Medical Association, for example. However, in sum, it is a budget that is worthy of our support. It will improve the lives of millions of Canadians, and that is fundamentally what we are here to do.

There is a letter that was written by 350 economists that was released today. Given that it is important to our financial system, I would like to read an excerpt from it: "The existence of tax havens does not add to overall global wealth or well-being; they serve no useful economic purpose." They serve to increase income inequality. Their "secrecy...fuels corruption and undermines countries' ability to collect their fair share of taxes." They distort the "working of the global economy.... They also threaten the rule of law.... There is no economic justification for allowing the continuation of tax havens".

• (1305)

Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to my colleague's speech, along with the other speeches from the Liberals and the NDP.

One of the things that stands out starkly with all the speeches is the consistency. All that those two parties want to do is to spend money. Everything is about spending money. Take the issue of electric cars. I just looked it up, and the subsidy for electric cars in Ontario is \$14,000 per vehicle. For both parties, it is all about spending.

The previous Conservative speaker for Louis-Saint-Laurent spent a great deal of his time talking about small and medium-sized enterprises, which is what Canada needs to create wealth in order to provide the social services that this country needs.

My specific question to my colleague across the way is this. Why does the Liberal Party never talk about creating a business climate for investment that will create the wealth, as a first step to creating a prosperous and healthy society?

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question, but I am not sure he understands what it means to build a prosperous society and encourage investment in our communities.

It requires a commitment to protect our environment. It requires a commitment to affordable post-secondary education. It requires a commitment to innovation. It requires a commitment to lowering taxes for the middle class. It requires a commitment to making sure that everyone in the community feels included and does not fundamentally live in poverty.

I encourage the member to support the budget if he truly believes in encouraging business to invest in our community.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments made by the member across with regard to the budget.

We on this side have expressed our deep concern that in fact the budget, while yes, it does have some positive components, does not actually get at dealing with the growing inequality in our country. One of the ways in which nowhere near enough ground is covered is the changes to EI. Right now many Canadians are hurting as a result of the downturn in the extractive sector. People in Alberta and Saskatchewan in particular as a result are hurting.

While this budget does include 12 regions in expanding the length of time where people can receive a benefit, it actually excludes areas like Edmonton and southern Saskatchewan where we know people desperately need that same kind of treatment.

Why does this budget not actually reflect the immediate needs of people in these parts of the country?

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: Mr. Speaker, I agree that we could do more to ensure that people have support when they lose their jobs. Even when we look at the cities that do have coverage, the coverage for individuals is simply not adequate, which is why I spoke to the importance of a basic income guarantee.

I do not think our current EI system is fundamentally sufficient. When we look at the coverage it provides, the experts say it is insufficient. When we look at the administration of the system, it really does not provide the service that we should expect as Canadians.

I would encourage my government to do more and to expand the programs we do have, GIS, Canada child benefit, that prove a basic income support program works.

Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothesay, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what is happening across the aisle, across the House? It is like me running my hockey team, ruining my hockey team, and then blaming the person who took it over.

Government Orders

We see what 10 years of regressive policies have done. We have seen what trickle-down economics have done: seven straight deficits, two recessions, and bad policy after bad policy

What the Liberals are doing is governing for the many, not the few. We have progressive policies that will make a difference in the lives of many people.

The members opposite talked about the cutback of the sports credit and the arts credit. There are people in my riding who cannot afford to pay for hockey. That is why our policies are for the many, not the few. I ask my colleague about the Canada child benefit and how that will redistribute wealth among people who need it, and how it will affect his riding.

• (1310)

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: Mr. Speaker, the Canada child benefit consolidates existing child benefits and it ensures that folks who make \$500,000 a year do not receive a government benefit. They do not need it. They should not have it. It should go to folks who do need the help.

This benefit, targeted as it is, means-tested as it is, will bring over 300,000 kids out of poverty. It will address income inequality in a serious way.

To my colleague's point with respect to boutique tax credits, the economic consensus on these is that they do not encourage these activities. They are effectively a handout to folks who do not need a handout and government revenue can be distributed more efficiently and more fairly.

Mr. Alexander Nuttall (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I find it interesting to hear the member across talking about \$500,000-income families, yet a Prime Minister who is a millionaire, and earns over \$300,000 a year, gets two taxpayer-funded nannies. What about the families who cannot afford the day care, and therefore cannot go to their jobs?

I stand today to address the House regarding the first budget presented by the government. This is a budget that was set to either meet the promises made by the Liberal Party or to show that the expectations set by the government are not in line with reality. Each promise to Canadians was broken, one after another.

From ballooning deficits to increases in taxes that they must have forgotten to mention to families, to an infrastructure spending plan of \$10 billion that did not result in the budget, to a bold plan for the Canadian economy that included tax cuts for small businesses that were not given, the government has failed Canadians.

It is incredible what three months will do in politics, from the time the government delivered a positive, enthusiastic throne speech, to the delivery of its first budget, which is riddled with debt and broken promises, and void of hope and opportunity.

The throne speech said:

The Government will undertake these and other initiatives while pursuing a fiscal plan that is responsible, transparent and suited to challenging economic times.

This is a government that delivered a \$20-billion to \$30-billion deficit, depending on whether we believe the parliamentary budget officer or the government. It raised taxes, failed small businesses, and left families with children in arts and recreation activities

without. This is a budget that has left the country wondering what happened to the optimism, to the opportunity that the Liberal Party promised to Canadians. What happened to the responsible transparent fiscal plan that was promised just three months earlier in this very House, with the throne speech?

When campaigning throughout the election, the Liberal Party frequently mentioned its tax increases to the top 1%, with the supposed corresponding tax cuts to the middle class. What it did not mention were two very important details. First is that the Liberal government was going to introduce a middle-class tax cut that benefited those in the top 10% of earners in Canada more than anybody else. Second is that the Liberal government would cancel tax cuts for families and children. These are tax cuts used by families to support healthy living and to fight obesity. They were used by moms and dads for hockey, soccer, basketball, volleyball, swimming, and many other activities.

My wife and I used the child fitness tax credit for mommy-and-me classes after my son was born and my wife was on maternity leave. They provided a financial incentive for new parents. Those are the same new parents that the government promised and vowed to support, only to remove their benefits just six months later.

The arts tax credit was used to introduce children and teenagers to the arts community, to grow the arts community from the grassroots. It was used by arts companies to develop day camps and other activities throughout the summer and March break weeks. These were credits that not only helped children hone in on already blossoming talents, but to discover new ones, new interests, new skills, new ideas that they never knew they had.

If that was not enough, the Liberals not only cut credits to families but they failed to deliver on the infrastructure dollars for municipalities, which they promised. The entire election, the Liberal leader campaigned across Canada on a small \$10-billion deficit for investment in Canada's infrastructure, a large one of \$10 billion. Not only did the deficit go up, but the investment shrank to less than half of what was promised to Canadians.

• (1315)

If we believe that the Liberals are going to create jobs through investing in infrastructure, our economy is going to receive less than 50% of the amount that we were promised. At the same time, the deficit is two to three times higher, again depending on who one believes, the parliamentary budget officer or the government, and that, my fellow Canadians, is about as close to a plan as the Liberal government has gotten for our economy.

Government Orders

Liberals love to talk about a plan in the House during question period, especially the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development. In fact, the minister talks about the Liberal plan all the time.

On February 1, the minister told the House that the government had a plan. On February 3, he said, "We have a plan". On February 18, he said, "We have a plan". On February 23, does anybody know what he said? He said, "We have a plan". On February 25, he said, "We have a plan". On March 7 and 8, he said, "We have a plan". Therefore, it is obviously surprising that in the budget there was no mention of an existing plan, not one to create jobs, not one to help families that are ailing, and not one to expand our economy.

It says on page 109 of the budget document that, the government will create "a bold new plan" over the coming years. That means no plan exists. It was merely a plan to create a plan. How could the minister consistently lead the House to believe that he had a plan for the economy when all he had was a timeline to create a plan?

His mandate letter reiterates what the Prime Minister said in southern Ontario about transitioning away from manufacturing. Since December 2015, I can honestly say that this government has followed through on that promise. Over 51,000 jobs have been lost in the manufacturing sector and it leaves us asking if this is according to plan. Obviously, one would hope not, but it leaves us with the next question, which is, exactly what is this plan?

While the minister did not provide a detailed copy of the plan to committee, we are left with only the little language provided in the budget document that a plan will be created over the coming years. In the meantime, the minister, the Prime Minister, and the government are spending tax dollars on projects without an overarching strategy.

The minister announced \$9.7 million in Waterloo region a few weeks back. These funds were outlined in the budget as part of an automotive innovation fund. Obviously, we on this side of the House were excited to see the implementation of a new strategy, which the government failed to outline in the committee or the budget, about how it would create jobs. Again, we asked the minister, "How many jobs will be created with this \$10-million investment?" The answer was zero direct jobs and perhaps five to 10 indirect jobs. Therefore, the answer is that either \$9.7 million equals zero jobs or \$1 million of investment equals one job.

These are the results that one can expect to attain when the government is not following a plan, when it is floundering, and when it has no idea how to grow the economy. The Canadian people deserve better than a great marketing plan, better than endless clichés and speeches, better than half-truths and broken promises. The Canadian people deserve the opportunity for success and the hope of a better life.

It is amazing that the Liberal government is so focused on its political fortunes that it is willing to risk the fortunes of Canadians. The Liberal Party was the party that promised great respect for the House, yet now it shamefully mocks the idea of greater debate. It was the party that promised small deficits and gave us large ones. It promised great investment in infrastructure and delivered less than 50%. It promised help for the middle class and cut support for

recreation and arts activities. It promised great debate and has constrained the House to 19 hours on a \$20-billion to \$30-billion deficit budget.

This is a government so unconcerned about the public purse that it does not even support an hour of debate for every \$1 billion it goes into deficit. This budget has left Canadians with so many more questions and so few answers, questions such as, what happened to the small \$10-billion deficit? What happened to the tax cuts for small business? What happened to the plan for the economy? What happened to the additional \$10 billion a year in infrastructure spending?

● (1320)

This is a government that never added up its commitments, never found a group it could not pander to, and never intended to keep its promises.

Today I stand and plead with the government to stop stifling debate, subverting democracy, and disrespecting millions of Canadians who voted for it.

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, even if I tried, I could not be nearly as negative as the member has just been. It has been my experience, with more than 12 budgets in the House, that when a member says there is absolutely nothing of value in an opposing party's budget, then the credibility of the speech is seriously eroded.

Of course, every budget has its challenges, and every party has its designs on how it best sees fit to spend scarce resources on behalf of Canadians.

I would like to ask the member if he could perhaps take off the cap of negativity and speak in a positive way and help our government. That is his job as a member of the opposition, as it is the job of a member of the government caucus, to improve things here. Could he help us understand how he sees opportunities for us to improve the way we are allocating those scarce resources, particularly when it comes to innovation? For example, with IRAP investments, startups, and venture capital, we would be investing massively in all these areas, both in the infrastructure and other sectors. Could he give us some positive assistance in improving things for the Canadian economy?

Mr. Alexander Nuttall: Mr. Speaker, nothing makes me more positive or happy than to give the member an idea of what I think would make me positive and happy in terms of return on investment. If the government would invest some money that actually creates jobs, not money that does not create jobs, I would be very happy.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is well known that one of the primary responsibilities, if not the primary responsibility, of members of the House, the reason we are sent here in a parliamentary democracy to represent our constituents, is to scrutinize the spending of the government. The government, as the executive, has the ability to plan a budget and to authorize its spending, and it is the job of every single member of the House, from all parties, to carefully scrutinize that spending. That is our prime function as parliamentarians.

Government Orders

However, the government has imposed closure on debate after only two days, only 19 hours. For those who may be watching this debate, we can get about four MPs speaking per hour. That means about one in five MPs in the House will have an opportunity to represent their constituents on the budget. Eighty per cent of MPs in the House will not have a chance to stand in the House and make their views, and more importantly the views of their constituents, known about the budget.

I wonder if my hon. colleague could comment on whether he thinks this is part of a democratic process, to have a government eliminate the ability of 80% of MPs to stand and have their views known on the budget.

• (1325)

Mr. Alexander Nuttall: Mr. Speaker, members on all sides of the House, whether sitting in the government benches or opposition benches, were excited by some of the language that I quoted earlier from the throne speech, in terms of respect for members of Parliament, giving them opportunities, not silencing them. However, today, just four months after the throne speech was adopted, the government is doing exactly that. It is silencing MPs. It is preventing them from being heard. Unfortunately, that does not agree with my vision and idea of democracy.

Therefore, I share the member's concerns, and obviously will continue to request the government to open up debate.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have heard a number of comments from the government on promises it is keeping, on openness and transparency. My hon. colleague expressed his dismay with some of the language we are hearing.

Very similar to this debate, not a week ago debate was limited on something that was probably the most transformative and important piece of legislation that the government and this sitting will ever see, physician-assisted dying. The government is again forcing closure on this.

For the purpose of being on the record once more, I would ask my colleague to please express his concerns, which are the same as ours, about the government's non-open and non-transparent ways.

Mr. Alexander Nuttall: Mr. Speaker, when we all stand in the House, we are heard often. I would like to leave it up to the Prime Minister's words, for Canadians to judge. Here is what the throne speech said:

Canada succeeds in large part because here, diverse perspectives and different opinions are celebrated, not silenced.

Parliament shall be no exception.

In this Parliament, all members will be honoured, respected and heard, wherever they sit. For here in these Chambers the voices of all Canadians matter....

Through careful consideration and respectful conduct, the Government can meet these challenges, and all others brought before it.

I will let Canadians decide whether closing debate aligns with those principles within the throne speech.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Denis Paradis (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a few comments about the budget.

First of all, a budget must reflect the needs and concerns of our fellow citizens. The budget before us reflects those needs and concerns. As MPs, we are all conduits of the needs and concerns of our fellow citizens.

I would like to say a few words about my riding. There are three regions in my riding: Magog and Sherbrooke; Cowansville, Bromont, and Sutton in the centre; and Bedford, Farnham, and Lake Champlain heading toward Montreal. Of course, each region has its own unique characteristics. Around Magog, it is all about landscapes, seniors, tourism, and culture. In the centre, we have industrial parks, innovation, and new technology. Around Bedford, Farnham, and Lake Champlain, we have agri-tourism, agriculture, and the rural sector.

Before getting into why the measures in this budget matter to the three regions in my riding, I would like to talk about the main reason I came back to politics. I have been away for the past 10 years. I was here before that. As I said many times during the election campaign, I decided to come back because of two lakes. We want the water in those lakes to be as clean as possible for future generations. I am talking about Lake Champlain and Lake Memphremagog. As you may know, when it gets hot in the summer, the water in Lake Champlain is less like water and more like pea soup. The people of my region, particularly those living in Bedford, draw their drinking water from Lake Champlain. I am fed up with this situation.

Together with mayors from the Lake Champlain region, including Jacques Landry of Venise-en-Québec, Réal Pelletier of Saint-André, Renée Rouleau of Saint-Georges-de-Clarenceville, Réal Ryan of Noyan, and Yves Lévesque of Bedford, I will meet with the International Joint Commission to see what kind of solutions can be implemented to fix the problem with the water in Lake Champlain.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank my colleague, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, who has visited Lake Champlain. Perhaps that contributed to the decision to invest \$19.5 million over five years in four transboundary basins. This is water that we share with our American neighbours.

Here is what must be done. We need to stop conducting studies that only serve to find other problems. Let us come up with solutions and implement them so that future generations can have clean water.

The first region is Magog. It is so beautiful, with its incredible scenery and Lake Memphremagog. I do not need to remind everyone how beautiful it is. That area of my riding has a lot of seniors. I must say, I am extremely proud of the measures in the budget that will help seniors. They include a 10% increase in the guaranteed income supplement for single seniors. That is the increase to the guaranteed income supplement top-up benefit that I mentioned earlier. There is also the elimination of the provision in the Old Age Security Act that raises the eligibility age to 67. These measures regarding the guaranteed income supplement top-up will benefit 900,000 people in Canada. This is an extremely important measure.

Government Orders

Tourism is also extremely important, not only for the eastern part of my riding, which includes the Magog area, but also for the two other regions in my riding. The budget allocates \$50 million over two years to Destination Canada to strengthen marketing initiatives in important international markets, such as the United States, our neighbours.

Tourism and culture go hand in hand. My riding is home to one of the counties with the most artists and people working in culture per square kilometre. I almost said “per square inch”, but of course I meant “per square kilometre”.

The budget also allocates \$105.9 million over five years to our national museums.

• (1330)

I am very proud, because there are two important museums in Brome—Missisquoi: the Missisquoi Historical Society and the Brome County Historical Society. These two museums will benefit from the additional money allocated in the budget.

In the middle, there is Bromont and Cowansville. This is a bit more of an industrial area. Bromont has a high-tech park, with General Electric and IBM. There is also a young company, Fabritec Group, which now has almost 500 employees and will soon have 1,500. It exports quite a bit to the United States. This is what the budget also does: it restores confidence in innovation and helps set us apart on the world stage through the use of new technologies.

As we have said many times, it is important to remove the gag order on researchers. The previous government muzzled researchers, so it is important to give them their voice back. It is important to strengthen innovation networks and clusters, and to strengthen Canada's network of incubators.

For the middle class, there is the Canada child benefit. We have heard a lot about this in the House. We are making post-secondary education more affordable by enhancing grants. We are increasing investments in green jobs and summer jobs. In the budget, we doubled the funding for student summer jobs.

I will quickly talk about the other region, which includes Bedford, Farnham, and Lac Champlain. I have talked about it a lot. It is a more rural area with all the vitality of rural life. I want to take this opportunity to say hello to the people in my riding who think that our budget in the House today restores confidence in Quebec's economy and restores people's confidence in investing.

Speaking of agriculture, I want to say a few words about the experimental farm in Frelighsburg. I will take the opportunity to congratulate Jean Lévesque, who was just elected mayor of Frelighsburg. The experimental farm was closed down by the Conservatives two or three years ago. The agricultural research we do in Quebec and Canada is important. In the budget, we invested in agricultural research. I told people back home that I would work hard, again, to ensure that the Frelighsburg experimental farm is reopened as soon as possible.

In closing, I want to say that a connected Canada is important to a riding like mine. It is important to have high-speed Internet. I have said it before and I will say it again, it is hard to believe that high-speed Internet is not available to all our small communities from

coast to coast to coast. I was here in the House when Brian Tobin was industry minister. At the time, he promised to connect Canada from coast to coast to coast. We are far from it. Canada needs Internet connection.

A week ago, I was in Noyan, a small community in my riding where, together with Développement innovations Haut-Richelieu I was pleased to announce that the entire village of Noyan, the entire population and every house, was connected. The budget promises \$500 million over five years to ensure that broadband service is provided to rural communities across the country.

In closing, I want to say again how proud I am to be the member for Brome—Missisquoi and how proud I am to be a member of the Liberal Party of Canada.

• (1335)

[*English*]

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have had the privilege of visiting the area my colleague represents. It is indeed a very beautiful area. However, I am afraid he is confusing the beauty of that area with the beauty in this budget, because there is none.

We were asked earlier if we could be positive about something in this budget. I would ask my colleague this. Is he not concerned that the agriculture sector was not mentioned once in the throne speech, and that the budget is virtually silent on it?

Also, there is the broken promise for the tax rate cut for small and medium-size businesses that was promised in the election. I remember sitting with my colleagues in other parties and they all promised this tax reduction for small business, but it is not in the budget.

Finally, there is nothing in the budget to fulfill the platform promise of the Liberal government that it would invest \$3 billion in home care and palliative care. It is critically important at this time when we are discussing physician-assisted suicide.

However, the biggest disappointment is on page 234. Debt charges alone between this year and 2020 will rise from \$25.7 billion to \$35.5 billion. That is \$10 billion more just to pay the interest. Is my colleague not concerned?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Denis Paradis: Mr. Speaker, first of all, if there ever was a time to invest in the economy, that time is now, because interest rates are low and there are exceptional opportunities for stimulating the economy in all our ridings and across the country. It is crucial. As mentioned in the budget, we are going to invest in the Canadian economy because interest rates are low.

I quickly spoke about agriculture in my presentation. It is important for the agricultural sector across the country to be healthy. We recently discussed diafiltered milk at length. All Quebec members, rural Ontario members, and members from all corners of the country are standing up for farmers. It is important that we continue to stand up for them.

Government Orders

We also talked about the social and economic climate. I spoke about Bromont, where Fabritec will increase its workforce from 500 to 1,500 employees within two years. It is important to create an economic climate and that is what we are doing with our budget.

• (1340)

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I commend my colleague for his environmental concerns.

When he speaks about pride, I find it difficult to understand how the Liberals can be proud of introducing an omnibus bill and imposing closure on parliamentarians. He said that MPs are the conduits for the people in our ridings. I do not see how I can be a conduit when I am prevented from speaking in the House.

I certainly agree that it is important to have an Internet connection. However, it is completely unacceptable for the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food to talk only about high-speed Internet when we ask him what is in this budget for agriculture.

It is not enough to say that they care about agriculture when the budget does not provide any compensation for agricultural producers who are affected by different international treaties. I do not see how they can say that they support farmers. I would like my colleague to explain that.

Hon. Denis Paradis: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot. I invite her and all of my colleagues to visit the magnificent riding of Brome—Missisquoi, which, as another colleague was saying, is very beautiful. It is also home to the wine trail and many other attractions. I invite everyone to visit my riding.

Agriculture is a constant concern for the Liberal caucus, whether we are talking about agriculture in Quebec, Ontario, western Canada, or the Maritimes. I am part of the Liberal rural caucus. We are having open discussions about agriculture and getting Canada connected, and we are trying to find the quickest way to meet our objectives.

The budget provides \$500 million to get Canada connected from coast to coast. That amount is not enough to solve the problem, but since we are here for at least four years, the caucuses that we belong to will be able to put pressure on the government to increase it.

In 2016, if we want young families to settle in our ridings and in rural areas, we need to make sure that every house and every business is connected to high-speed Internet.

[*English*]

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by speaking about the aspects of the budget bill that are contained in Bill C-12. I am really disappointed that members of the House were not given the opportunity for debate and study in committee of Bill C-12 to make it a better bill. Veterans have been shuffled aside for so long, but apparently, according to the Liberal government, not long enough. Veterans and their families are in despair. We hear it every day in the veterans affairs committee. Too many are absolutely desolate.

It is no secret that Veterans Affairs Canada has been badly mismanaged by past Conservative and Liberal governments. Pensions have been clawed back, front-line services have been cut, and the result has been increased wait times for desperately needed

help. Quality home care is simply not as available as it should be and we all know that long-term care services are shrinking. Soldiers with PTSD face months of delays before even being referred for help and then that help is hard to get.

The changes in the bill to the earnings lost benefit and the disability award for veterans are good first steps. I hope the changes will result in more veterans qualifying for benefits and that those heroes of our country see a positive improvement to their quality of life.

However, this omnibus bill lacks the full support that veterans need.

First, there is no support for mental health in the budget, and this is a huge concern. Many veterans are suffering from the trauma of combat, the stress of their service to Canada. Yet there is a lack of support for veterans and their families to recognize and care for mental health issues that result from their experiences in the field and beyond on behalf of their country. Let us not ever forget that the government asked them to do their duty and they did not fail, and we must not fail.

Sadly and unacceptably, the budget bill would not increase support for spouses or caregivers of injured veterans. Partners of CF members are often required to leave their own jobs to care for the injured veteran. Those caregivers are provided with little training and very little support. This not only impacts the current income of caregivers, but it impacts their own pensions down the road.

Every member of the House knows that pension benefits are largely based on the earnings of an individual's years of employment. Therefore, caregivers who give up employment pay are at a terrible disadvantage. They pay a terrible price in their senior years because their pensions are simply inadequate.

When Canada sends its women and men in uniform into conflict, they and their families accept unlimited liability, and there is the very real possibility that what they are ordered to do could cost them their lives. As a country, we have nothing less than a sacred duty to our veterans to care for them when they return. It is time for a new era in the government's relationship with veterans, one based on respect that ensures dignity, financial security, and quality of life.

If the government is serious about repairing the damage at Veterans Affairs Canada, it should take immediate action and ensure all veterans have the income support they need. We are calling on the government to prove this in a new era by working with veterans and to immediately review, update, and improve the new veterans charter, including addressing the issue of lump sum payments, those payments currently offered to seriously injured veterans.

Government Orders

It is crucial that the government develop a one veteran one standard policy that would ensure all veterans would be treated equally, regardless of when or where they served.

It is time to end the unfair service pension clawback for retired and disabled Canadian Forces and RCMP veterans and show good faith by increasing the survivor's pension of veterans.

It is time to remove the archaic marriage clause restricting benefits for marriages that occur after age 60. Imagine in this day and age calling older spouses who marry, love, and care for veterans "gold diggers". What a ludicrous and petty label.

● (1345)

The government should provide timely accessible care for veterans' health and well-being. We as a nation must improve and expand PTSD and mental health supports for veterans to ensure they get the care they need, and get that care quickly without barriers, without harmful delays.

The government should reverse the cuts to long-term care for veterans, and expand the veterans independence program to allow seriously injured and elderly Canadian Armed Forces and RCMP veterans to continue to live at home. It should not put that burden of care on partners, on spouses, on caregivers. The government must make sure that the veterans independence program is there, in addition to what caregivers and spouses provide.

I have spoken to this House about post-Korean vets who served Canada in times of great danger only to be turned away from long-term care in their time of need. It is disgraceful to say to a veteran that his or her contribution was less because it occurred after 1954.

Even though the wounds may not have been obvious at the time of release or active duty, they are wounds that come from dedicated service to Canada. Those who suffer those wounds must be respected. They deserve long-term care in a veterans hospital, if that is what they wish.

There must be increased supports for veterans' families and caregivers who are often the main support for veterans.

We have an absolute obligation to ensure that services are delivered with a veterans-first approach. This can be done by establishing a formal covenant for veterans' care that recognizes the government's moral, social, legal, and fiduciary obligation to care for Canada's veterans.

I submit it is also important that we eliminate the Veterans Review and Appeal Board, which is staffed by government appointees who have too often been unresponsive to the realities faced by veterans seeking disability benefits. It is time to replace the old VRAB with a medically focused review process for appeals.

Unlike WSIB, the court cannot overturn a Veterans Review and Appeal Board refusal. The court can only refer the issue back to the same people who decided against the veteran in the first place. How can this result in fairness for veterans? It would seem to me that the appearance of arm's-length non-interference in the VRAB from government is actually a refusal of government to take responsibility. It is politics at its worst.

Finally, Canadians wish very much to show all veterans that they respect them and that these veterans deserve our support. This can be accomplished by a government prepared to expand eligibility and increase funding for the Last Post Fund to ensure that all veterans can be guaranteed a dignified funeral.

New Democrats value the work and sacrifice of our Canadian Forces and RCMP veterans and personnel currently serving, whether they served at home, in war, or in peacekeeping missions. We call on the government to repair our country's relationship to one that is based on that respect, rather than on the current state of neglect.

We must ensure that our veterans and their families are well cared for from the moment they sign up to the moment they pass away, including that dignified funeral and burial I talked about.

Bill C-12 and the same measures covered in this budget bill do not come close to fully addressing the needs of our veterans. The manner in which we honour and care for our veterans and their families is a reflection of the integrity of this country. When we ask people to put their lives on the line for Canada, we must ensure that their sacrifices are recognized and their losses, monetary, physical, and emotional, are compensated, and that their service is recognized with grateful acknowledgement.

If we leave one single veteran living in poverty, one single veteran homeless, one single veteran suffering the agony of post-traumatic stress, or one single dependant of that veteran unsupported and out in the cold, we will have failed in fulfilling our sacred covenant.

I know we can do better. I have faith, hope, and optimism. I believe that we need, and can work towards creating, a system of comprehensive support for our veterans. This budget bill could have addressed the gaps we face in fulfilling our covenant to veterans, but sadly, it has missed the mark. We are capable of better. We cannot let anyone tell us it cannot be done.

● (1350)

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for seeing, like the government, that there are a lot of things that need to be done for veterans. I appreciate her outlining some of the things that still need to be done.

When the member talked about the good things relating to veterans that were in this budget, which is probably more than a lot of budgets in the past, would she add the reopening of a number of offices that were closed for veterans, and re-employing a number of employees to help the veterans? As she mentioned, after what veterans have done for our country, the waiting times are totally unacceptable.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Mr. Speaker, certainly, I have profound concerns about the shortfalls of the budget when they relate to veterans.

I must remind members opposite that those offices have not been opened yet. They have been promised, and they are critical in terms of serving the needs of veterans, but they are not open yet. In terms of the extra staff, yes, there are promises for extra staff, but we have heard in the veterans affairs committee that that, too, is not enough.

There has to be a change in culture in Veterans Affairs Canada. There has to be a real understanding that if there are indeed programs and services available, then veterans and their families must be given full access to them, instead of playing the guessing game that has been going on for too many years.

I call it a computer surprise. Basically, if one can figure out where on the computer to access the program and decide how one fits in, then maybe, if the application is just right, one might get some of that benefit. I am tired of computer surprises.

• (1355)

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for highlighting our veterans. Just this past Saturday, I had the honour of spending some time with a World War II veteran, Mr. Harry Watts, who worked as a dispatch writer in World War II in liberating Holland. What an honour it was to stand beside him and to hear his stories.

My question relates to palliative care. I had the honour in the previous Parliament of working with the member's colleague, Mr. Joe Comartin, a member of Parliament from Windsor. We worked on a report called "Not to be Forgotten", which highlighted the sad state of palliative care in Canada. Recently, we just passed a bill at second reading to authorize physician-assisted suicide. The bill is currently before the justice committee.

My concern is that in spite of the Liberal platform promise to put \$3 billion into home care and palliative care initiatives, there is not a penny in the budget for that. I wonder if my colleague shares that concern.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Mr. Speaker, yes, I do recall the work that was done in the previous Parliament in regard to palliative care. It was very important work. Despite the fact that it was a Canadian doctor who came out with the idea of palliative care, we have done very little in the last 30 years to make progress on that. It is absolutely essential that, in terms of all Canadians, including veterans, end-of-life care be sensitive and appropriate, but above all, it needs to be available.

I would like to add concerns that are connected to this, which have to do with long-term care. Back in the 1970s, the federal government downloaded its responsibilities for veterans in terms of long-term care on to the provinces. Over and over again, I have seen post-Korean veterans who desperately have needed the support of their federal government to have long-term care, and those needs have been denied. That has to end, too.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I know that members who come from British Columbia, particularly the Lower Mainland, are aware of the absolute crisis in affordable housing. In the city that I come from, Vancouver, the average house

price is now well over \$1 million, meaning that the vast majority of families cannot afford to buy a simple house with a backyard, which our parents and many of us in this chamber have done. I am wondering if there is a similar problem in Ontario.

I would like to ask my hon. colleague whether she feels that there are sufficient resources devoted in the budget to address the absolute crushing need for affordable housing, and a federal government that is once again a partner with the provinces and cities in building that essential resource for Canadians.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Mr. Speaker, I would say that no matter where we go in this country, the need for affordable, decent, appropriate housing is critical. When the Conservatives and Liberals cancelled and defunded the national housing program, we saw an escalation of the homeless. That includes homeless veterans. Imagine the travesty of their doing their bit for their country with integrity and honour, and then finding out there was nothing there for them, including a decent and affordable home.

I would say that the lack of a housing policy in this budget, and in the budget before that, and in the budget before that, going back to the 1990s, is a disgrace and we need to address it urgently.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

DISASTER ASSISTANCE

Mr. Bob Bratina (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, like all Canadians, the residents of Hamilton East—Stoney Creek stand in solidarity with the people of Fort McMurray.

I have been moved by statements made by members in the House regarding this terrible situation, and in particular a statement by the member for Mégantic—L'Érable, whose residents know better than most the experience of a catastrophic event.

A Hamilton firefighter, Scott de Jager, learned that Lac-Mégantic's fire department lost a vehicle in the conflagration, and Hamilton had a surplus ladder truck. It was fully outfitted by the fire department and donated to Lac-Mégantic. The deputy mayor, Daniel Gendron, had tears in his eyes when he received the keys in Hamilton.

In the days and weeks ahead, we will gain a better understanding of the needs of Fort McMurray. I urge all three levels of government and citizens to pay careful attention to messaging from the mayor and other responders regarding the specific needs of Fort McMurray, and donate where possible.

Statements by Members

●(1400)

[Translation]

LUCIEN G. ROLLAND

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on April 19, Lucien G. Rolland, a pioneer who left his mark on the history of Saint-Jérôme, died at the age of 99. He was made an Officer of the Order of Canada in 1984.

The Rolland family is well known in Saint-Jérôme and Sainte-Adèle, throughout the Laurentians, and beyond. We have all, at some point, written or printed documents on fine Rolland paper.

In 1947, Lucien Rolland started working for the family business, which was founded in 1882. He followed in the footsteps of his father, grandfather, and great-grandfather, and he worked his way up to become the president of the Compagnie de papier Rolland, a great Quebec company that left its mark on the North American pulp and paper industry. He remained president of the company until 1992.

I would like to add that Mr. Rolland was very involved in his community and contributed to countless social, humanitarian, and cultural causes that mattered to him. He made an exceptional contribution to the development of our nation.

I applaud his community involvement, and on behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I extend my most sincere condolences to the family and friends of a remarkable citizen of Saint-Jérôme. Thank you, Mr. Rolland.

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ROXANNE RHEAULT

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last weekend I attended a very moving event at which the community of Daveluyville paid tribute to figure skater Roxanne Rheault. At the event, she announced that she is retiring from competition and will begin a new career on the largest and most luxurious cruise ship in the world, the *Harmony of the Seas*. When she announced the news, she shared some interesting quotations that illustrate how mature she is, at just 21 years of age. She said, “They say that those who travel are always learning, but they also say that the greatest traveller is the one who has made at least one trip around himself.”

Roxanne is a true role model for young Canadians. She distinguished herself throughout her career by winning many provincial and national championships. In 2015, she even earned a spot on Canada's prestigious national figure skating team. She is an inspiration to all the young athletes in my riding.

Bravo, Roxanne, and I wish you all the best in your new adventure.

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[English]

HUMBER RIVER—BLACK CREEK

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the communities of Jane and Finch are some of the warmest and most culturally vibrant places in Canada, but times are tough for my constituents.

A decade under the thumb of a government putting politics before people has clearly cut deep. Conservatives held back on spending, stalled social programming, slashed integration services, ignored job creation needs, and denied help to families, students, seniors, and the unemployed.

This hurtful and divisive approach took a toll on our communities, and people in my riding felt the pinch.

This government has taken a people-focused approach, and we are already seeing changes. Increased Canada summer jobs funding, financial help for families with children, and a restoration of the retirement age are steps that put people first.

This is a government that is clearly putting people first.

* * *

[Translation]

HOMOPHOBIA

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, incredibly violent acts of homophobia occur in my riding and elsewhere.

On April 30, a gay couple was physically assaulted near a bar in the Hochelaga-Maisonneuve neighbourhood. The couple was violently beaten for holding hands and kissing in public.

I am proud of operation kiss-in, which was held last night near where the two young men were attacked. Hundreds of people gathered to peacefully denounce this act of brutality. Kisses, accolades, and messages of solidarity were an admirable response to hate.

Over the past year and a half, Gai Écoute has recorded nearly 1,000 acts of homophobia, 43% of which were criminal in nature. Although the LGBTQ community has won rights, it has a long way to go to win social acceptance. That is why it is important for Canadian representatives to continue to fight against homophobia.

Love has no gender. Let us stand in solidarity.

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[English]

JOAN HADRILL

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Montreal's West Island has lost a woman of peace and principle, who was committed to social justice in all its forms. Joan Hadrill lived by the motto: think globally, act locally.

Joan was instrumental in founding WIND, West Islanders for Nuclear Disarmament, and the Montreal chapter of the Raging Grannies. She was a hands-on advocate, selling fair trade coffee and crafts at local events, activities that ultimately led to the establishment of Dix Milles Villages, a West Island fair trade retail outlet.

For her lifetime of service, Joan received numerous awards, including a doctorate in divinity from McGill University, as well as the Quebec Lieutenant Governor's seniors medal. Joan combined principle, resolve, and a faith-based dedication to making the world a better place, with a grace and civility that could not help but make people want to join in and try to do the same.

To Joan's children, Geoff, David, Lesley, and Julia, and to their families, we offer our deepest condolences for the loss of a life well lived in the service of family and community.

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● (1405)

MATERNAL AND NEWBORN CHILD HEALTH

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our Conservative record on maternal and newborn child health is a record of which I am extremely proud. All pregnant women and their unborn babies need access to care during pregnancy, skilled care during childbirth, and care and support in the weeks after childbirth.

Today, Uju Ekeocha of Nigeria is visiting Ottawa and she applauds our initiative. She stated:

This is the non-controversial approach that will be...welcomed...throughout the vast continent of Africa regardless of region, prevalent religion, tribe, clan and socioeconomic status.

The most precious gift that Africans...give to the world at this point in history is our inherent Culture of Life. Most Africans understand, by faith and tradition, the inestimable value of human life, the beauty of womanhood, the grace of motherhood and the blessing of married life.

Uju is well qualified to speak to this. As a biomedical scientific specialist in England, she has the passion for preserving and promoting the African culture of life. She is an extraordinary woman who is doing extraordinary work.

Welcome to Canada, Uju.

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CANADIAN CABLE SYSTEMS ALLIANCE

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize members of the Canadian Cable Systems Alliance, who are in Ottawa today talking about important issues related to telecommunications policy in Canada.

CCSA represents more than 115 independent communications companies serving Canadians from coast to coast to coast. They connect Canadians to information, entertainment, and other critical services. They are co-operatives, family businesses, rural companies, first nation bands, and entrepreneurs providing services to Canadians generally outside urban markets across the country. These are companies that invest in their communities. They provide jobs and sponsor local events.

The government has announced \$500 million in the recent budget for investments in rural broadband services to help connect millions of Canadians who lack the access to services that many of us in the chamber take for granted. We look forward to working with CCSA and its members as we roll out this program in the coming years.

Statements by Members

COMMISSIONER OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

Mr. Michael McLeod (Northwest Territories, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is the last day of the Hon. George Tuccaro's term as Commissioner of the Northwest Territories. He was sworn in as the 16th commissioner in May 2010 and has been a dedicated advocate of youth and healthy lifestyles throughout his term.

Prior to his time as commissioner, he had a long and distinguished career with CBC North radio. He was the anchor for the current affairs program *Northbeat* and also produced a Gabriel Award-winning documentary on teen suicide in Canada's north.

Mr. Tuccaro is a recipient of many awards, including the 125th Anniversary of the Confederation of Canada Medal, the National Aboriginal Achievement Award, and both the Queen's golden and diamond jubilee medals. George Tuccaro spoke at many events and ceremonies. His message was consistent: we have to love ourselves enough to want something better in our lives.

On behalf of the people of the Northwest Territories, I thank him for his service and wish him luck and much happiness.

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CYSTIC FIBROSIS

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today, many colleagues of all partisan stripes are wearing yellow roses. We do this to honour the thousands of Canadians afflicted with cystic fibrosis, which remains the number one killer of young people in this country. Happily, great strides are being made to extend the lives of people who have CF. Already, this terrible disease has been transformed from one that kills in early childhood to one that increasingly can be held at bay until middle life. Of course, that is not enough. We must not rest until every CF kid can look forward to living into old age.

Why the yellow rose? Yellow is the colour of hope; and it is a rose because, 40 years ago, a little Ontario girl named Heather Summerhayes was told that her baby sister, Pam, had an incurable disease, which Heather could not pronounce. She called it "65 roses", and her book about Pam's life and death bears this title.

Via medical research and proper care, we can ensure that the Pams of today will enjoy long, happy lives. Let us renew our collective commitment to this goal.

Statements by Members

●(1410)

[Translation]

QUEBEC CITY SOCIETY OF SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Louis-Hébert, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on April 28, I had the pleasure of participating in the fourth annual fundraiser for the Société Saint-Vincent de Paul de Québec. This highly successful event raised \$106,000 for this organization, which has been helping those in need in my region for more than 165 years. This organization runs on donations, of course, but primarily on the dedication of some 800 volunteers.

Today, I want to talk about these volunteers and, especially, about all the good they do in my riding and in my region. I come across these kind people in Saint-Jean-Baptiste, Sainte-Geneviève, Notre-Dame-de-Foy, Saint-Benoît, Saint-Charles-Garnier, Saint-Thomas, Saint-Mathieu, and Sainte-Ursule, which is where I am from. These volunteers include people like Léda Bouchard, who has been the backbone of the food bank in Notre-Dame-de-Foy for more than 15 years.

These people have class, a strong social conscience, and all kinds of compassion. Every week, they quietly help hundreds of people in my community. They make me realize, every time I come back to Ottawa, that I truly do have the most wonderful riding.

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[English]

PEDIATRIC BEREAVEMENT

Mr. Neil Ellis (Bay of Quinte, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I rise to proudly pay special tribute to the organizers of the Butterfly Run, an event designed to support those who have experienced the devastating loss of an infant or child. Close to \$70,000 was raised. All money will be donated to the pediatric bereavement fund at Quinte Health Care.

I personally want to thank three remarkable women, Barb, Lorelee, and Beth, not only for their organization of this event but also for their strength and compassion, and for sharing their own personal experiences. Our butterfly girls have transformed grief and loss into a positive action and have inspired an entire community.

As the MP for the Bay of Quinte, I stand today to honour baby Charlie May McFadden, and to remember all of the infants and children whom we have lost but will never forget.

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GOVERNMENT OF MANITOBA

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the new Premier of Manitoba, Brian Pallister, and the entire Progressive Conservative team on forming a new government on April 19. In particular, I would like to highlight that the PC team set new modern records by winning 40 of 57 seats in the House and 53% of the popular vote.

From across our great province, my former colleagues in the Manitoba legislature won resounding pluralities, and they will soon be joined by a new group of MLAs who are eager to chomp at the bit and get Manitoba back on track. There are many challenges ahead.

However, I have full confidence in this entire PC team as it works collectively to improve the lives of Manitobans.

I know that every member of this House wishes the new Pallister administration well as it sets out to implement its new plan for a better Manitoba.

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CULTURAL HERITAGE OF SAINT JOHN

Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothesay, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, economists agree that one of the best ways to spur economic growth in Saint John—Rothesay is the promotion of our rich cultural heritage. I call it the Saint John trail of history. Our Saint John City Market is the oldest in Canada. The Carleton Martello Tower stood guard over the entrance to what is now Canada since 1813. Fort La Tour fell in 1645 after the Battle of Saint John, where Lady La Tour defended the fortress for three days. Partridge Island was named by Samuel de Champlain. In 1791, the third Canadian lighthouse was built there, later housing the world's first steam-powered foghorn. We also have the *Marco Polo*.

It is important to preserve our shared historical tradition. Developing these sites presents the federal government with a win-win situation: Canadians experience an important part of their history, and my region gets a much needed economic boost.

Lastly, I encourage all Canadians to join us in Saint John, New Brunswick, this summer to experience its historic landmarks and wonderful heritage.

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VOLUNTEERISM

Mr. Fin Donnelly (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise in the House to honour outstanding citizens making a difference in Port Moody, Coquitlam, Anmore, and Belcarra: Miranda Andersen, a young environmental filmmaker who raises awareness through social media; Tima Kurdi, whose activism on behalf of Syrian refugee families has touched lives around the world; Léon LeBrun, who helped build our community by establishing Festival du Bois, the local Trans Canada Trail, and the Trails BC network; Sandra Niven, for her work at the Port Moody Arts Centre, Port Moody Ecological Society's Fingerling Festival, and Community Ventures Society; Drake Stephens, for his years of hard work making our community "bear aware"; Don Violette, whose work with the Burquitlam Community Association helped establish a community garden and protect environmentally sensitive areas; and George Assaf, whose volunteer work includes stream-keeping duties and habitat restoration of Port Moody streams.

These community heroes are living the change they want to see in the world, and I am proud to honour them today.

Oral Questions

●(1415)

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Grande Prairie—Mackenzie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the misleading rhetoric and self-glorification of the Liberal cabinet is not fooling anyone. The Minister of International Trade seems to have convinced herself that it was she alone who resolved the issue of country of origin labelling; however, Canadians are not convinced. They know that it was the former Conservative agriculture and trade ministers who did all the heavy lifting on these files.

While the former Conservative ministers had their priorities straight, promoting Canadian agriculture around the world, the current minister has lost sight of these priorities. Rather than promoting Canadian interests, the minister has been on a campaign of self-promoting vanity trips, costing Canadians over \$20,000.

The Minister of International Trade should halt her partisan self-admiration and give credit where credit is due. She should pay tribute to her predecessors and get busy doing the work that was left to her, such as ratifying the trans-Pacific partnership and other trade deals that would vastly improve the lives of farm families across this country.

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CYSTIC FIBROSIS AWARENESS MONTH

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to rise in the House today in honour of Cystic Fibrosis Awareness Month. During this month, I encourage all my colleagues to wear a rose to support the thousands of individuals across Canada who are affected by this disease.

[Translation]

Cystic fibrosis is the most common deadly disease among Canadian children and young adults. It is estimated that one out of every 3,600 children born in Canada has cystic fibrosis.

[English]

Researchers have made great strides in recent years. Today, 50% of Canadians with cystic fibrosis are expected to live into their early fifties and beyond.

[Translation]

It is very important to promote awareness in Canada, in order to show those suffering from this disease that we are fighting alongside them.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY

Mr. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as wildfires in Alberta continue to rage, it appears that 90% of Fort McMurray has been spared, and the brave men and women who helped save that city deserve our thanks and praise.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Andrew Scheer: Now the rebuilding will begin. In addition to aid and infrastructure, the region will need significant investment to ensure there are jobs to come back to.

Will the Liberals stop blocking private sector investment that would cushion the blow and allow pipelines to be built?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I too, in the name of all Canadians, congratulate the brave firefighters and first responders who have been there to do extraordinary work through these terrible blazes in Fort McMurray.

I want to congratulate, as well, all the MPs from all parties, particularly the Leader of the Opposition, who have been very strongly engaged on the ground, supporting their fellow citizens. I want to congratulate all Canadians who across the country came together to give incredibly generously to the people of Fort McMurray through the Canadian Red Cross and in other ways.

I am pleased to confirm that I will be going, personally, to Fort McMurray on Friday to offer support for all Canadians.

Mr. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Alberta has been hit hard by many factors beyond its control. The low price of energy and natural disasters have left thousands out of work. One thing we can control though is ensuring that the private sector is able to bounce back. Unfortunately, the Prime Minister has added additional red tape and unnecessary hurdles to pipeline approval projects. His new term “social licence” is actually just political licence.

Could the Prime Minister assure energy workers that he will not allow special interests and politics to block important pipeline projects?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that after 10 years of failing to get pipelines built to tidewater, the Conservatives opposite still do not understand that the only way to build pipelines in the 21st century is to demonstrate the community's support, the partnerships with indigenous peoples, and the strong science that is going to demonstrate that we understand that environmental protection and economic development go hand in hand. It is not an either-or choice.

That is what Canadians have elected us to do and that is what we are working hard to get done.

* * *

●(1420)

ETHICS

Mr. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, he keeps forgetting the four major pipelines that were approved by our government, and he forgets about the additional political hurdles he has added.

[Translation]

With regard to their trip to Washington, we know what they are saying and the messages that they are sending.

Oral Questions

We know that all bilateral meetings are important. The Prime Minister's priorities are what Canadians are concerned about. There was a limited number of seats at the table and he made sure to save spots for his in-laws and bagmen, but he left his Minister of Natural Resources at home.

What role did his wife's parents and the party hacks play for him to think that it was more important for them to go on that trip than his own Minister of Natural Resources?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for 10 years, the former government wanted to talk to the United States about only one thing: pipelines. Unfortunately, that poisoned Canada's relationship with the United States. As a result, our economic growth, our relationship, and the work of our companies and entrepreneurs have suffered.

The reality is that it has taken a lot of energy to rebuild that relationship. We put our hearts and souls into it, and I was touched by the fact that President Obama personally invited my mother and my in-laws to be part of this big family reunion, the reunion of two families—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle.

[*English*]

Mr. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, no one believes that President Obama, on his own, decided to invite the Prime Minister's in-laws. No one believes that President Obama, on his own, decided to invite Liberal Party fundraisers. Canadians know how these kinds of official events work.

Does the Prime Minister deny that it was his office that sent the White House the invitation list for the state dinner?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yet again, the party opposite has demonstrated it has very little understanding of the strong friendship between Canada and the United States.

I can say, on top of the official delegation seats that we were allocated, the President and his office insisted that we add to it my mother and our in-laws, because it emphasizes the relationship. These were extra seats that the President made available. They were not in the official delegation that we provided.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Hon. members are enjoying this exchange. Let us ensure we can all, including the Speaker, hear both the questions and the answers, please.

The hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle.

Mr. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, is the Prime Minister sure that they just added in his in-laws and did not just drop the natural resources minister to make room?

It is not about whether some of these people paid back the cost of their flights; it is about the fact that they were there at all. For example, the Prime Minister's party fundraisers were granted privileged access to high-ranking U.S. officials. Now that is not a bad deal: repay the cost of a commercial flight and meet with connected Washington insiders.

However, do members know who was not there in Washington? Do they know who was not there to promote his portfolio? Do they know who was not there at the table to promote Canadian businesses? It was the natural resources minister.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Yet again, Mr. Speaker, we see that the members opposite simply do not understand how important the relationship with the United States actually is.

Working together across broad portfolios, creating the kinds of interactions and strength between our two countries that Canadians rely on every day to move goods and services across the border, to find markets for their produce and products, these are the things that for 10 years the members opposite failed to get done. That is why we are working hard to grow Canada's economy and friendship with the United States.

* * *

[*Translation*]

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, by announcing that the RCMP will analyze the Panama papers data made public this week, the government wants to show that it is serious about cracking down on tax evasion.

However, the Prime Minister is doing everything he can to block the investigation into the 15 multimillionaires who illegally hid money in tax havens with the help of KPMG.

Can the Prime Minister explain why there is a double standard? Who are the KPMG clients and executives that he is trying to protect?

• (1425)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, we indicated very clearly that it is vital that all Canadians pay their fair share of taxes.

That is why we added \$440 million to the budget. We want the Canada Revenue Agency to crack down on tax evasion and tax avoidance. That is why a Liberal MP, in committee, proposed an investigation into KPMG, and why we are working so hard: we want to ensure that all Canadians and all companies pay their fair share of taxes.

[*English*]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, actually it was the NDP that proposed it, and it was voted down by the Liberals.

The Panama papers revealed a vast network of shell companies in offshore tax havens. One Canadian firm, Newport Pacific, created an astonishing 60 companies in known tax havens. The vast majority of these offshore shell companies were set up while the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage worked at Newport Pacific.

Has the Prime Minister asked his parliamentary secretary if he assisted in the marketing, development, or design of any offshore companies in tax havens?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Party has been very clear that, as government, we are committed to ensuring that all Canadians pay their fair share of taxes and to cutting down on avoidance and tax dodging.

The fact is that we put \$440 million in this latest budget to ensure that the Canada Revenue Agency has the tools to go after tax avoidance and tax evasion. That is something that we are committed to. That is something that we are working very hard on. That is what we will continue to put forward, regardless of the smears put forward by the members opposite.

* * *

SMALL BUSINESS

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): And crickets on his parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Speaker, today the Liberals moved to cut off debate on their omnibus budget bill, something they once deplored when the Conservatives did it and something they promised never to do.

Buried within the bill, among changes to 35 other laws, is the cancelling of small business tax cuts, tax cuts that the Liberals promised they would keep. The PBO reported today that this broken promise would not only cost small businesses \$2.2 billion, but it would kill jobs and hurt economic growth. Now that the Prime Minister knows the true cost of his flip-flop, will he do what he promised and reduce the small business tax rate?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Actually, Mr. Speaker, the budget implementation bill contains commitments that we made in our platform. There are very clear commitments in the budget. These are things that we are putting forward that would indeed allow for nine out of 10 Canadians to get more generous child benefit cheques as of July 1.

On top of that, we have allowed for around 20 hours of debate on the second reading of this bill. These are things that are greater proportionately than what any previous government has done for the small size of this budget bill.

* * *

[Translation]

PHYSICIAN-ASSISTED DYING

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a number of experts and legal professionals have serious concerns about the constitutionality of Bill C-14. The legislation could be challenged in court, but in committee, the Liberals have rejected nearly all of the amendments that would have fixed the bill.

What is preventing the Prime Minister from seeking the Supreme Court's opinion on Bill C-14?

[English]

With so many raising concerns about the constitutionality of Bill C-14, why will the Prime Minister not simply refer the bill to the Supreme Court to avoid years of legal challenges.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on Bill C-14, Canadians understand that this is an

important and big step in our nation's history as we move forward on a delicate issue under a time crunch by the Supreme Court.

One of the things Canadians expect is that we take this very seriously and responsibly, and that is exactly what we are doing before committee, and that is what we have been doing with these consultations.

The NDP has put forward amendments to enlarge the scope of the allowances. The Conservatives are putting forward amendments to further restrict it. We are listening to all proposals. We are working hard to ensure that Canadians have the right legal framework to help them with these incredibly personal and sensitive decisions.

* * *

[Translation]

ETHICS

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister made choices.

When he went to the White House in Washington, he chose who to bring with him. He chose the president of the Liberal Party and the party's chief fundraiser, but the Minister of Natural Resources, whose job it was to be there, was left behind in Ottawa.

My question is very simple, and it is for the Prime Minister. Can he give me just one good reason why the guy who raises money for his party was there but the Minister of Natural Resources, who works for all Canadians, was not?

● (1430)

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said yesterday, and as the Prime Minister has said repeatedly, we are proud of everything we accomplished in Washington during our historic visit.

I would like to remind my colleague that this is the first time since 1997 that the White House has hosted a state dinner in Canada's honour. A number of individuals were invited by the White House and, as I also told my colleague yesterday, he knows perfectly well that all expenses associated with their presence there were reimbursed.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are not proud of the fact that the Prime Minister chose to take his Liberal Party bagman with him to the White House, rather than ministers who lead important departments, ministers whose duty and responsibility it was to attend.

What happened in Washington is simple. The member for Papineau acted like the leader of the Liberal Party rather than the Prime Minister of all Canadians.

I am giving him one more chance to explain himself. Can he give us even one good argument to justify why his bagman was there, but not the ministers who lead huge departments that are important to all Canadians?

Oral Questions

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since this is about ministers who lead important departments and who were part of the delegation, my colleague knows very well that they engaged their American counterparts on many files, including climate change, environment and energy, international security, defence co-operation, the global coalition against ISIL, border co-operation, and trade and commercial relationships.

The delegation had a rather busy schedule, and we are proud of what was accomplished.

[*English*]

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fact is that the Prime Minister's friends and family enjoyed a weekend of VIP access, sipping champagne with the Washington elite.

Meanwhile ministers, like the Minister of Natural Resources, were left off the guest list. We know the guest list was submitted by the Liberals. That is why family members and party executives were part of the delegation.

Why were Liberal insiders and family brought along instead of actual government decision-makers?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I draw my colleague's attention to the answer the Prime Minister just gave in terms of the family members who were invited directly by President Obama in addition to the official delegation. She should reflect on that answer. The Prime Minister gave a very precise answer to her exact question.

The member talks about the delegation. The delegation was comprised of many senior ministers who engaged their American counterparts, as I said, on issues as important to Canadians as climate change, trade, energy, and the environment. We made progress on something as important as pre-clearance.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Natural Resources sat at home while the Liberal Party bagmen wined and dined with U.S. cabinet ministers. The Minister of Natural Resources sat at home while the Liberal Party president mixed and mingled with the senators.

The government had a chance to use this event to build energy relationships, but it wasted it. Is the reason he brought friends and family instead of the Minister of Natural Resources because the Liberals want to shut down the energy industry?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): What utter nonsense, Mr. Speaker.

Four hundred thousand people move back and forth across the Canada-U.S. border every day and \$2.4 billion in trade move back and forth across that border every day. We have to make that border secure and we have to make it efficient for the movement of people and goods. We negotiated and concluded an agreement on pre-clearance, which that party worked on for five years and could not get it done. We finished it.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: That was fun folks now let us settle down. It is not even Wednesday. It is the time of year when we have a lot of school

students in the galleries. Let us keep that in mind and show good behaviour.

Let us listen to the hon. member for Edmonton Riverbend.

* * *

DISASTER ASSISTANCE

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we apparently have managed to get under the hon. member's skin in the last few days.

Today I would like to talk about Fort McMurray. It will be a while before the people of Fort McMurray can return to their homes. Despite the disaster, rebuilding plans have already begun, but the Prime Minister has left almost no wiggle room in his fiscal plan to help fund the rebuilding efforts.

Will the Liberals change their infrastructure plan to rebuild Fort McMurray?

• (1435)

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was back home in Alberta along with my colleague from Edmonton Centre and the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness to see first hand and meet with families that had been impacted by these wildfires. We saw the generosity and the compassion of Canadians toward them in helping them and standing shoulder to shoulder with them in this time of need.

We are with Alberta today, we will be with Alberta tomorrow and well into the future as we rebuild Fort McMurray.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): So I guess that means there is no money, Mr. Speaker.

In their latest unethical fundraising email, the Liberals used the devastating fires in Fort McMurray to fundraise for their party. While Canadians across the country have unselfishly given over \$60 million to help Albertans, the Liberals are raising money for themselves.

Why is the Prime Minister begging for donations on the backs of Canadians who just lost their homes?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians have rallied to this cause with enormous generosity. They have responded to the human needs that are so apparent in Fort McMurray, and they have done so with a great Canadian human spirit.

In addition to that, the Government of Canada is providing support through the Department of National Defence, the RCMP, Transport Canada, the innovation department, Health Canada, Natural Resources Canada, Public Services Canada, the interagency on firefighting, the CRA, employment insurance, and that does not even get to the important question of DFA.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday and today the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs reiterated her government's intention to endorse the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. However, the government is rather short on details as to what that will look like.

I am pleased to inform the House that the work has already been done. My bill seeks to adopt and implement the declaration. The question therefore is very simple.

Will the government support Bill C-262? A yes or no will suffice, by the way.

[English]

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is a historic day as the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs is speaking in New York at the United Nations, outlining that we will remove any objections that we have had to the United Nations designation of indigenous people.

Our support for the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is a part of advancing our commitment to indigenous—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today is indeed a historic day because this is the day the government has to implement Jordan's Principle or be found in contempt of the Human Rights Tribunal.

I have just returned from Attawapiskat and I can tell the House how badly needed those resources of Jordan's Principle are to hire child mental health workers and to augment child and family services. The budget came and went with zero dollars for Jordan's Principle, so the Human Rights Tribunal has called the government out.

Will the government meet the deadline of the Human Rights Tribunal and flow the money? If so, when will it start to flow because the children cannot wait any longer?

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the work that is going on currently in the community of Attawapiskat is an excellent example of how our government is responding to the principles behind Jordan's Principle in that we are working across jurisdictions.

There is no question of whose responsibility it is. We are all working together. The federal government is working alongside and the provincial government is working alongside first nations leadership to ensure the needs of the community are met in the immediate phase.

We are also working together to ensure that we develop long-term, sustainable solutions for these communities.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the people of Fort McMurray are wondering when they can return to their homes, or what is left of them. They want to go back to their jobs if they still have them.

Oil companies have cut production, small businesses have shut down and self-employed contractors are left wondering what is next.

While the premier is meeting with oil companies today to discuss getting production back online, the Minister of Natural Resources is “having conversations in Ottawa”. When will Albertans see real support for energy sector workers?

● (1440)

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over the last 24 hours I have had conversations with the ministers of forestry and energy in the government of Alberta, and I have spoken to several chief executive officers of major oil companies in Fort McMurray.

They all report how satisfied they have been with the co-operation of governments and industry to ensure that people have been returned to their homes safely, and miraculously that is the case. They also report to me that production is now restarting, and they expect it will be done in an orderly and timely way.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, without a doubt, the oil sands companies, workers and all the people around Fort McMurray and across Alberta have done amazing work to support them during this tragedy.

It could be weeks or months before residents of Fort McMurray can get home and get back to work. They have shown they are “Alberta strong”, but that does not pay the bills.

Yesterday, the Minister of Natural Resources said that his government was, “responding to that reality”. Could the minister tell Canadians exactly how the government has responded to the job losses caused by the fire?

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have responded in the first place in the most important of all ways, and that is to guarantee the safety of those who were evacuated from their homes, to minimize damage to infrastructure and to keep an ongoing conversation with those who are running these industries to ensure their infrastructure is protected so that when this tragic incident passes, we will be well-positioned to rebuild the sector, which is in the interest of all members of the House.

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SMALL BUSINESS

Hon. Alice Wong (Richmond Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the decision of the Liberals to increase the small business tax rate is proving worse and worse. Last week, I asked why the Liberals broke their promise to our small businesses. This broken promise will cost the industry \$2.2 billion.

Why do the Liberals continue to abandon our hard-working small business owners?

Oral Questions

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on January 1, the tax rate for small businesses was reduced. Today the parliamentary budget officer confirmed that the decision to maintain the reduced business tax rate was the right one.

The report confirmed that the previous government's approach would have created just over 1,000 jobs at a cost of almost \$2.1 billion to the economy with no growth to the economy.

It is important that we support our small and medium-sized businesses. I am here to ensure they are productive, more innovative and export oriented. We will continue to do the work we are doing.

Hon. Alice Wong (Richmond Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I wish Liberals understood small businesses, but the facts just do not support that.

A report from the parliamentary budget officer today indicated that in addition to the \$2.2 billion cost to the industry, the changes to the small business tax rate would actually cost jobs. When will the Liberals stop punishing small businesses?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the budget officer for offering his projections to Canadians and parliamentarians.

In a previous report, the budget officer's verdict was that our budget as a whole would have significant positive impact on the Canadian economy and create tens of thousands of jobs.

As a whole, budget 2016 proposes targeted investments, totalling \$50.2 billion. Small business is implicit throughout the entire budget. Small businesses are the backbone of the economy. They are our job creators, and we support small business.

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JUSTICE

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, during the election, the Liberals promised to add gender identity to the human rights code and to the hate crimes section of the Criminal Code.

In February, the Minister of Justice told us that she would introduce legislation to protect gender identity and gender expression. Last week, the urgent need for these protections was underlined when the Montreal clinic performing gender-affirming surgery, the only such clinic in Canada, was targeted by arson.

The need is urgent. Will the government bring forward this legislation now to help prevent these kinds of hate crimes in the future?

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the honourable colleague across the way for his tireless advocacy with respect to gender identity.

Our government is committed to bringing forward legislation that will respect and ensure that we eliminate discrimination in all forms in this country. Legislation will be coming forward very shortly.

• (1445)

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what happened last week at the Centre métropolitain de chirurgie, the only hospital centre in Canada that performs gender confirmation surgery for transgendered people, is simply shocking.

Discrimination and violence against transgendered people persist, and the government has a duty to do something about that. The Liberals promised to protect the rights of transgendered people, but we are still waiting for a bill.

When exactly will the government introduce a bill?

[English]

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to reiterate that our government is committed to helping ensure that all Canadians feel protected from discrimination. This includes protecting transgendered people from discrimination and hate propaganda.

We will be bringing forward legislation on this matter in the very near future. I would look to all members of this House to support us in moving that forward.

* * *

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Ramez Ayoub (Thérèse-De Blainville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the world has made remarkable progress in the fight against HIV, tuberculosis, and malaria, in large part due to support for partnerships such as the Global Fund.

We are now at a turning point, and the next generation could be the first to live in a world free of these three diseases. The measures we are adopting today are decisive for the future of our children.

Can the Minister of International Development and La Francophonie tell the House what Canada intends to do to sustain the momentum in the fight against these three diseases?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of International Development and La Francophonie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Thérèse-De Blainville for his question.

Just yesterday, the Prime Minister announced that we will be hosting the Global Fund replenishment conference in September. The Global Fund is an important organization that seeks to eradicate HIV, tuberculosis, and malaria.

We also announced that we will commit \$785 million over three years. That represents a 20% increase over the previous commitment, which will save eight million lives.

Oral Questions

[English]

AIR CANADA

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know that the Minister of Transport met with Air Canada at least four times in the month before introducing his Air Canada Act bill. At committee, he stated that Air Canada aircraft maintenance was never discussed. However, two days later, Air Canada's CEO said that his company always raises the issue of the Air Canada Public Participation Act, including maintenance, during meetings with the government.

Why is the Minister of Transport misleading Canadians?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Air Canada is a large airline in this country, and I meet frequently with its representatives to discuss a range of issues. I will continue to meet with them in the coming years over all the issues that are important to our airlines.

I spoke at the committee. I answered the questions that my honourable colleague asked me about maintenance, which is a very important part of the costs of an airline. The fact is, the modification to the law that we made will give more flexibility to Air Canada to compete in this very competitive field.

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker the truth is that the minister continues to play with the facts by insisting that all the parties affected by this legislation are delighted with it. That is simply not true.

The Quebec government has asked for a delay in this legislation, and yesterday in committee, the deputy premier of Manitoba stated that C-10 jumps the gun.

Why does the minister keep coming up short when explaining the urgent needs of this legislation?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we all know, the Government of Manitoba came to an agreement with Air Canada about six weeks ago. It was announced that Air Canada would create 150 quality jobs in Manitoba beginning in 2017, and the Government of Manitoba said it would drop its litigation with Air Canada.

I have said this a large number of times. We recognize the importance of Manitoba's aerospace industry. We are growing this economy. Canada has the fifth-largest aerospace sector in the world. We are committed to improving it, and we will do so.

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[Translation]

AEROSPACE INDUSTRY

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government is not governing. It is just stalling.

The Liberals said that they would announce their intentions for Bombardier before the budget. Then, they told us to wait for the budget and that we would see. Fifty days after the budget, we have yet to see anything.

This government loves to talk about its transparency. Can we finally see the agreement?

● (1450)

[English]

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Bombardier is a strong Canadian company. That is why we are engaged with the company on a solution. It is a solution that we want to focus on jobs, on R and D, and on keeping the head office here in Canada. That is why we are making sure that we are engaged with Bombardier in a manner that also sets it up for success in the long term, because it is important to the Canadian economy, to the aerospace sector, to the supplier base of 950 suppliers, the 180,000 jobs that are in that sector, and the \$29 billion it contributes to our national economy. We will continue to remain engaged with the company. It is a priority of the government.

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us talk about solutions.

It would have been so easy for this government to show some tangible support for Bombardier. One way to support this company would be to help it bring in some orders. Porter Airlines was prepared to purchase 30 C Series aircraft.

Why did the Minister of Transport say no to extending the Billy Bishop airport runway?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question. I have answered it many times.

During the election campaign, we promised the people of Toronto that we would strike a balance between commercial pressures and quality of life on the shores of Lake Ontario. We kept our promise not to open the tripartite agreement.

* * *

[English]

STATUS OF WOMEN

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, getting more women elected and having a more representative Parliament is a goal we all share. While this Parliament set a new record, women still have only 26% of the seats in the House. At this rate, it will take over 60 years to achieve equality.

I have tabled the candidate gender equity act to take a concrete step forward. Will the government support getting my bill to committee and work with us, so together we can take another step for gender equality?

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the hon. member's efforts. We take note of his private member's bill and will study it on its merits when it is debated in the House.

Oral Questions

Our government supports the idea of more women and people of various genders participating in the political debate in the country. This is clearly a commitment that our government and our Prime Minister have shown. We look forward to continuing the leadership on this front.

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SEARCH AND RESCUE

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government is closing the Comox marine communications and traffic services centre today. This was a bad plan when the Conservatives hatched it, and after hearing damning evidence during the fisheries committee study, the minister should have seen reason and cancelled the closure.

Comox is central to B.C.'s emergency response planning. The government said it would make decisions based on evidence. Therefore, why is the minister ignoring evidence and putting lives and the B.C. coast at risk?

Hon. Hunter Tootoo (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member pointed out, at the end of the day today, Victoria will be delivering the services that were previously offered at Comox. I have full confidence that the Coast Guard will be able to continue to provide a full set of essential services at the location.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the employees. I know consolidation has created challenges for them. I would like to personally thank the individuals who chose to stay on and relocate to another location. I would also like to thank the members who chose to leave for—

The Speaker: The hon. member for St. Albert—Edmonton.

* * *

JUSTICE

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has been six months since the Minister of Justice was appointed, and in that time, the minister has found plenty of time to attend pay-to-play fundraisers, but has not found the time to appoint a single judge. This at a time when our courts face an unprecedented backlog. All the minister can say is that she will get around to it.

When will the minister stop fundraising and start appointing desperately needed judges?

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I recognize the importance of making appointments to the judiciary across the country and doing that based on merit, based on diversity. We are entering into a comprehensive process to do that.

Having said that, I do recognize that there are a number of positions that need to be filled in the very immediate future, and we are undertaking a quick process in order to be able to do that.

• (1455)

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister has to understand the urgency in appointing judges, and yet the minister has not even figured out the process, let alone appointed a single judge. The minister is creating a crisis because of her own apathy.

How backlogged do the Liberals want the courts to be? When will the minister stop going AWOL and start doing her job?

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are committed to ensuring that we make substantive and thoughtful appointments to the judiciary. I will ensure and am committed to engaging with stakeholders, including the judiciary, on these appointments. We are committed to a review of the judicial appointment process based on the principles of openness, transparency, merit, and diversity. I will ensure that we move forward with these appointments within a time frame that recognizes the needs of the courts.

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, minimum sentences for convicted drug traffickers who target kids under the age of 18 was recently overturned by the B.C. Court of Appeal. Our youth need to be protected from drug traffickers who directly target them.

Are the Liberals prepared to challenge this ruling?

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have been tasked by the Prime Minister to undertake a comprehensive review of the criminal justice system, including sentencing reform. We are moving forward with this review, engaging with stakeholders, engaging with experts in this area, to ensure that we provide the overall review, which has not been done for many, many years.

We will be reviewing the mandatory minimum penalties and sentences, certainly recognizing that there is a need to punish the more severe serious crimes, while ensuring that we maintain sentences that are appropriate and in line with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

* * *

FINANCE

Ms. Filomena Tassi (Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for the past two weeks, representatives of the International Monetary Fund were in Canada as part of its annual consultations under IMF article IV. The staff of the IMF were here to survey the economic landscape and look forward to Canada's future economic development.

Could the Minister of Finance please share his thoughts on the IMF consultations with the House?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to meet with the staff of the IMF last week and to receive their report, which praised our pro-growth fiscal measures.

We are tremendously proud of the path we are on, and we are very pleased that the international community is recognizing that what we are doing here in Canada is having a real and measurable impact. We are looking forward to continuing to work with the international community on inclusive growth, both here and abroad, to make a real difference for Canadians and our world.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last month, UNESCO, which is supposed to be a body dedicated to historical fact, held a bizarre vote. UNESCO's executive board voted overwhelmingly for an offensive resolution denying Jewish history and Israel's ties to Jerusalem's Temple Mount and the Western Wall. Only six states, including the United States and the United Kingdom, voted against.

Canada is not a member of UNESCO's executive board, but we have not heard a peep from the Liberals condemning this outrageous vote. Why not?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada strongly supports Israel and strongly fights against anti-Semitism on every front. Canada will never do anything other than that. It is something that we are very committed to doing, in every circumstance.

* * *

[Translation]

DAIRY INDUSTRY

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week, the Liberals voted against the NDP's motion to immediately resolve the problem of diafiltered milk. Instead, the government proudly announced that it was going to spend the next 30 days conducting more consultations with producers and the industry. The industry has lost \$18 million. More consultations, no action, and no promise to really solve the problem of diafiltered milk.

Can the minister reassure producers and promise to finally solve the problem of diafiltered milk in the next 25 days?

• (1500)

[English]

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my hon. colleague's question and concern. We recognize the importance of this emotional issue for the dairy farmers and we are working to reach sustainable solutions for the whole of the Canadian dairy sector. We will work with the dairy sector and we will come up with a solution to this issue.

* * *

THE BUDGET

Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Halifax and Dartmouth have welcomed the Prime Minister and numerous ministers since January. We witnessed a new level of respect for Atlantic Canada from our government. This government understands that Atlantic Canada has a culture of hard work and innovation. In fact, the finance minister kicked off his pre-budget consultations in Nova Scotia.

Would the minister please tell us about the positive change the budget would bring to middle-class Nova Scotian families?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to be able to go to Nova Scotia to start our pre-budget consultations. Coming from a province that has a huge number of universities, we know that our investment in research infrastructure in universities will make a difference in Nova Scotia.

Oral Questions

Budget 2016 is a bold plan. It will help middle-class families and those struggling to join the middle class. Efforts like the Canada child benefit and the top-up to the GIS will help families in Dartmouth—Cole Harbour and across Canada.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADA BORDER SERVICES AGENCY

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Dieudonné M'Bala M'Bala has been convicted many times for hate speech, slander, and glorifying terrorism. This evening, he is supposed to put on a so-called comedy show in Montreal.

My question is very simple. Did the government use its power to prevent this man from entering Canada?

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when individuals present themselves at the border to enter into Canada, they are examined by the Canada Border Services Agency. The professional officers of that agency take all relevant factors into account, including the existence of a criminal record.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Équiterre and the David Suzuki Foundation support the petition against energy east. Like the UPA and millions of Quebeckers, they rightly oppose this project, which threatens our lands and waterways. Unfortunately, the Liberal government does not want to listen and is turning a blind eye to this growing opposition in Quebec.

Will the 40 government members from Quebec continue to support TransCanada or will they stand up for the interests of Quebeckers?

[English]

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the application to build the energy east pipeline has not yet been lodged with the regulator, the National Energy Board.

There will be many months of public discussion when the hon. member will be encouraged to appear in front of the board, to write a letter, to visit a website, to have conversations with the community about her attitude about whether or not that pipeline is in the national interest. To ask the government to offer an opinion before it is before the regulator is irresponsible.

Government Orders

[Translation]

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Fédération des chambres de commerce du Québec and its 60,000 businesses are asking the government to do something about the unfair tax treatment that penalizes those who sell their businesses to family members rather than strangers.

Our business people are sick and tired of Ottawa making life difficult for small and medium-sized Quebec businesses. Quebec has already solved this problem. If Quebec were independent, this problem would no longer exist.

My question is as follows: will any of the 40 government members stand up to fix this problem for our business people?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that it is very important to have a tax system that works. We think that now, our system works for the people of Quebec and the whole country.

We will review the tax system over the coming year, as announced in budget 2016. The review will give us an opportunity to consider measures that are important for Canada's system.

● (1505)

Mr. Alupa Clarke: Mr. Speaker, this morning, the House Leader of the Official Opposition moved a motion to remove the provisions concerning veterans from the budget implementation bill and to immediately pass them at all stages. Unfortunately, the Liberals did not support that motion, so I would like to give them another chance to do so.

I therefore ask the House for unanimous consent for the following motion. “That, notwithstanding any Standing or Special Order or usual practice of the House, Bill C-15, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 22, 2016 and other measures, be divided into two Bills, namely, Bills C-15A and C-15B, as follows: (I) Bill C-15A shall contain all the provisions of the Bill respecting the Canadian Forces Members and Veterans Re-establishment and Compensation Act to, among other things, (a) replace “permanent impairment allowance” with “career impact allowance”; (b) replace “totally and permanently incapacitated” with “diminished earning capacity”; (c) increase the percentage in the formula used to calculate the earnings loss benefit; (d) specify when a disability award becomes payable and clarify the formula used to calculate the amount of a disability award; (e) increase the amounts of a disability award; and (f) increase the amount of a death benefit; and All the provisions that provide, among other things, that the Minister of Veterans Affairs must pay, to a person who received a disability award or a death benefit under that Act before April 1, 2017, an amount that represents the increase in the amount of the disability award or the death benefit, as the case may be, and the consequential amendments to the Children of Deceased Veterans Education Assistance Act, the Pension Act and the Income Tax Act; (II) Bill C-15B shall contain all the remaining provisions of Bill C-15 and retain the status on the Order Paper that it had prior to the adoption of this Order; and That Bill C-15A be deemed read a second time and referred to a Committee of the Whole, deemed considered in Committee of the Whole—”

The Speaker: Order.

Apparently the hon. member does not have the unanimous consent of the House.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES (A), 2016-17**

A message from His Excellency the Governor General transmitting supplementary estimates (A) for the financial year ending March 31, 2017, was presented by the President of the Treasury Board and read by the Speaker to the House.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

● (1510)

[English]

BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2016, NO. 1

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-15, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 22, 2016 and other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have listened to a number of the speeches given by other members.

As I join this debate, I must note, with some amusement, the positively apocalyptic terms in which my friends across the way have described the kind of country we had between January 2006 and October 19, 2015. I thought we were getting on rather well, but to listen to the way in which our country was described during that period, it is as if we narrowly avoided the introduction of some kind of *Hunger Games*.

Now to be sure, the odds were not always in our favour, and we did go through a significant global financial crisis. However, our performance, when it comes to growth, and inclusive growth, was very strong. The record needs to be corrected, because a poor understanding of the past can set us up for ineffective efforts to shape the future. Indeed, the game-makers of this budget seem to be proceeding as if we were in an alternate reality.

Over the last 10 years, a Conservative government managed Canada through the worst global recession since the Great Depression. The record is well known. There were no bank failures and no tax hikes. Through these years, we had the best economic growth in the G7, the best job creation record, with 1.3 million net new jobs created, and by far the lowest federal debt-to-GDP ratio at the end of it.

We were able to implement a stimulus program, one that was timely, targeted, and temporary. As well, the government delivered a balanced budget one year ahead of schedule.

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Now, although the new government wishes to paint a drab picture of Canadian life over the last 10 years, most of these facts are quite beyond dispute. Instead of disputing them, our friends on the other side have sought to claim that this growth has not been inclusive. However, even on that score, the facts do not add up to their assertions.

Here is what Hillary Clinton said about the Canadian middle class in 2014. I know some Liberals may find her too right wing for their liking, but she is the presumptive Democrat nominee. Secretary Clinton said:

Canadian middle class incomes are now higher than in the United States. They are working fewer hours for more pay, enjoying a stronger safety net, living longer on average, and facing less income inequality.

It is no surprise that even while Donald Trump is modelling his economic policy on Panem, Secretary Clinton is looking to Canada.

There are two principal ways of evaluating the performance of the middle class: median net worth and median income, median being a better measure than average in this case, because it prevents the numbers from being skewed upwards by a small percentage of high performers.

Between 1999 and 2012, the median net worth of Canadian families rose by 78%. That translated to more than 50% growth in net worth for every single income quintile, except the lowest which still grew, though by not as much. This is no district 12.

What about median income? According to analysis from the far-right *New York Times*, a noted supporter of the previous government, Canada had the richest middle class in the world in 2014. Real, or inflation-adjusted median income, in fact, went up more than 20% since the beginning of the last decade, while real median income in the U.S. remained stagnant.

Tracking real economic changes, as opposed to nominal change, is fundamental to a sound description of the economic picture. Nominal indicators always go up, regardless of other factors, because of inflation. Real figures adjust to look at non-inflationary effects. This rather elementary distinction is important but it is something that the game-makers of budget 2016 seem to have missed, and it seems rather, intentionally.

I read the whole budget after it came out, even though it was not exactly as gripping as *The Hunger Games*. I know my colleague from Calgary Shepard suggested nominating this book for the Giller Prize in fiction, but I would respond that even good fiction has to be believable.

It was obvious to me already, on page 11 and 12 of this budget, that there was some active and intentional sleight of hand. On page 11 is a graph purporting to show real median wage income of Canadians from 1976-2015. This particular graph paints a rather positive picture, especially of the last 15 years. Although with an increasing number of Canadians self-employed and doing very well, it is sort of strange that this budget focuses on wage income only, instead of overall income.

• (1515)

Then, on page 12, we have a graph that shows increasing household costs. The increases appear to be alarmingly steep, until

we realize that the graph is titled “Nominal Increase in Household Costs, Selected Items”.

Aside from the whole selected items issue, the nominal costs of things always go up because of inflation, which is precisely why economists almost always use real or inflation-adjusted numbers. However, this budget document uses real numbers on page 11 when it is talking about wages, and then nominal numbers on page 12 when it is talking about increasing costs, which I think is a transparent attempt to suggest the illusion that costs have grown faster than wages. This is a trick that might catch a lot of people. However, anyone with training in economics would spot the problem right away. Therefore, however riveting the entire document may be, we only have to get to page 12 to see these efforts as sleight of hand, to see the intentional writing of what is respectfully a bit of fiction.

The budget game-makers clearly felt it was important to obscure the performance of the Canadian middle class. Why? Because those who get the past wrong often find it easier to get the future wrong as a result. When we have a well-performing economy, we need to focus on preserving and playing to our strengths. However, if the economy is doing poorly, then we are in a stronger position to justify a radical shift.

To justify a politically motivated radical shift, the Liberal government had to paint this absurdly drab picture of the last 10 years in an effort to explain its decision to blow up hard-won fiscal gains. For the Liberal government, destroying things is much easier than making them.

During the last election, Donald Sutherland came out as a Keynesian, and therefore a New Democrat supporter. In this respect, he is at least consistent with his character. I am sure Katniss Everdeen is more Hayekian, at least in her skepticism about big government. Sutherland's simultaneous endorsement of Keynesianism and the NDP platform perhaps undercut his point that an American resident could be just as up on Canadian politics. I do not recommend taking political advice from American residents named Donald. However, here is the important point about Keynesian stimulus.

Keynes himself saw this policy as a response to only a particular set of circumstances. He thought the economy could be boosted during a short-term economic downturn if the resulting debt was paid off via surpluses during good years. We stimulate the economy during tough years, we pay off our debts during good years, and we balance our budget over the long term. There is obviously some logic to this, but it does require us to correctly diagnose where the peaks and valleys are. If we outspend our revenue during good years as well as bad years, then we will run out of money fairly quickly.

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I think Canadians accept that we can and should run budget deficits at certain times, but only at certain times, and only modestly, because we obviously cannot run deficits in perpetuity. Again, we eventually run out of other people's money. Keynes understood that the right policy becomes the wrong policy in the wrong circumstances. The Liberal government promised to run short-term deficits on the basis of their talked-down version of the Canadian economy. However, that \$10 billion projected deficit has ballooned to more than double its projected size. Reading this budget, I imagine Canadian voters feel sort of like Gale did during the Quarter Quell. I might call this a betrayal, but for there to be betrayal, there would have to have been trust first place.

Our children will have to pay the price for this profligate spending. They will be forced to scrounge with less because of the government's capricious fiscal game. They did not volunteer for this.

One of the most important insights of *The Hunger Games* is that politics becomes pernicious when pageantry is elevated over policy. The Liberal government is all about pageantry, and this budget is all about pageantry. However, it tells a story that simply does not accord with the facts on the ground, not in present-day Canada anyway.

The basic claims about the situation which the budget seeks to confront are incorrect and therefore its proposals for radical new deficit spending are out of step, even with the Keynesian philosophy on which it is supposed to be based. I am sorry to say that there is no philosophy to this, but there is an overabundance of pageantry. When the global economy catches fire, we may not have the cushion to weather the storm the next time around because the odds will not always be in our favour.

• (1520)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Intergovernmental Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I guess it is somewhat comforting to now realize that the economic theory of the Conservative Party comes from a work of fiction.

Putting aside *The Hunger Games* and the appetite that leaves us to go after this a bit harder, I am kind of struck by something.

The party opposite often references the *New York Times* article about how well the middle class is doing. I often wonder if those members have actually read it beyond the headline, because the second paragraph says the following:

Members of the middle class in Canada worry about whether they can afford college for their children and whether their children will find jobs afterward. Housing costs are a major concern, as are everyday costs for transportation and mobile-phone plans. Middle-class Canadians worry about inequality.

In light of the fact that this is what Canadians are worried about, is it any surprise they changed governments in the last election?

However, what surprises me more is that the party opposite often rails about the deficit, somewhat oblivious to the fact that the Conservatives added \$150 billion to the debt.

In light of the fact that the member opposite does not believe in Keynesian economics, does not believe we should go into debt when we are not in recession, which the Conservatives did in 2007 well before the 2008 recession, is he willing to resign and sit as an independent because of the disgrace of that party and its record on fiscal management?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, I am sure the member's question was serious.

The *New York Times* article points out, and I think Canadians and our party would agree, that things are never perfect, that people can always do better, and always want to do better.

The point the member has missed is that our performance through a global economic recession was better than any other country in the G7. It is right that in challenging global economic circumstances, Canadians would be very conscious of it, one might even say worried about some of the things the member cited. However, that does not change the fact that our relative performance was very strong.

On the issue of deficits, and this is important, through the 10 years of Conservative government, we lowered the overall debt-to-GDP ratio, the economy grew, and there were stimulative deficits that were timely targeted and temporary during a certain period of time.

I did not say that I did not believe in Keynesian economics. I did not really answer that question one way or another. There are merits to a variety of these different ideas. However, the point I made was that the budget was not Keynesian, because Keynes' economic recommendation was for stimulus in times of recession, not for constant deficits. No serious economist would recommend constant deficit, because we eventually run out of other people's money. It just does not make sense.

[Translation]

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would simply like to mention to my hon. colleague that indeed, Bill C-15, an omnibus bill, does not make any sense. It will change some 30 statutes, including the Employment Insurance Act and other such legislation.

That being said, it is rather ironic, because the Liberals always criticized the Conservatives for all their omnibus bills in 2011, 2012, and other years.

What does my hon. colleague make of the fact that the Liberals are now making the same anti-democratic move?

[English]

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, my view is that there are certain cases where we need to have different kinds of measures together in a bill if they broadly accord with something we are trying to do at the same time. However, the member is right to point out a profound disconnect between what the current government members said when they were in opposition and what they are doing now.

We have had the use of time allocation again, for example, as well as the last use of time allocation on one of the most challenging, important, and personal issues that Parliament has dealt with in a very long time. Therefore, there is a big disconnect between what was promised, big changes on some of these procedural things, and now what the government is doing.

I wish the Liberals would have had the courtesy to tell Canadians the truth if they intended on using some of these techniques. They should have told the truth about that during the last election.

• (1525)

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member wisely did not answer that last question, because it showed a misunderstanding of the omnibus bill procedure.

I am delighted the budget had so many things for so many Canadians that it had to deal with a number of other acts. However, what it has not done, and what people were incensed about in the past, is include a whole bunch of information from things that are not related to the budget, other issues that government wants to get through, which is the improper use of omnibus bills.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I did answer the question. I think there is a disconnect between what the government promised and what it is doing.

I do not often hear people incensed about details of parliamentary procedure so much as they are incensed about how the budget would raise taxes on small business and would run massive deficits far beyond the scope of what was promised. These things are going to hurt our long-term economic well-being. If there is something that people are incensed about, I think it is much more the substance of this than the process.

Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to stand in the House today and speak to Bill C-15, the budget implementation act. I am extremely happy because the budget would deliver for constituents in my riding as well as people all across Canada. It is a budget that would help all Canadians in various capacities.

I would like to begin by speaking about Eastern Passage, an area in my riding on the north side of Halifax harbour. Eastern Passage is a vibrant community that is home to many local entrepreneurs, a small craft harbour, great restaurants, and a healthy dose of east coast hospitality. This community is proud of its neighbourhoods and its people. Many tourists from Nova Scotia, from all across Canada, and from outside of Canada visit this small but vibrant area.

The fishery and tourist industries in Eastern Passage would be much improved if the upgrading included the extension of the wharf and dredging of the harbour. This would not only help the fishermen to enter an existing harbour, but it would also stimulate the economy for the tourist industry. These two projects would create much-needed prosperity.

Some members may not know that about 250,000 visitors on cruise ships stop in Halifax harbour in the summer, spring, and fall. These people could access Eastern Passage in 15 or 20 minutes by boat. This would allow them to enjoy the hospitality of this small village and other parts of my riding.

I would love to be able to stand here today and make those official announcements but I am unable to do that. However, I am proud to say that the budget would create opportunities for many communities across Canada and enable them to access funding for many infrastructure projects. It is our responsibility to work hard and closely with various organizations and communities to help them

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apply and hopefully receive funding for their very important projects.

It is obvious that the last 10 years were very difficult for many communities across Canada. There was very little co-operation and very little investment in many communities over the last 10 years with the last government. This budget is evidence that we listened well to Canadians across Canada throughout our campaign and since then.

The budget not only address infrastructure, but it also addresses many other important areas that we need to talk about. It ensures that we are respecting our obligation to support our veterans who served so proudly for Canadians to ensure that we maintain peace. They fought for our freedom around the world. It is extremely important to talk about the involvement and the support of veterans.

I have a copy of a book entitled *Further Than Yesterday: That's All That Counts* by retired Captain Medric Cousineau, a resident of my riding in Nova Scotia. He is all too familiar with the risk of defending our country abroad. Medric was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder several years ago and suffered from depression. Luckily, he had access to a service dog named Thai that was constantly by his side. Today, Medric is in a much better place and this is reflected in his inspiring book.

• (1530)

Budget 2016 invests in veterans like Captain Cousineau by reopening the nine veterans offices that were closed by the previous government. This will help those veterans who in service to Canada, returned from war to Canada with various issues. We need to make sure they have these services. Reopening these offices will provide much-needed help. The budget also proposes to reduce the client-to-case manager ratio to 25:1. That means veterans across Canada will receive quality, efficient, and personalized service. These and many other measures, including the increase in earnings loss benefits, the increase in disability awards, and the expanding access to the higher grades of the permanent impairment allowance amount to one of the most significant investments in our veterans in a generation.

Just as our veterans have defended our future, our youth will build it. This is why budget 2016 also makes innovative investments in young Canadians. Also serving as minister of youth, our Prime Minister has shown strong leadership in having a government that will include the points of view of young Canadians from across the country.

That is why I am so excited about the Prime Minister's proposed youth advisory council announced in this budget. This youth advisory council will consist of young Canadians from all walks of life and will advise the Prime Minister in a non-partisan way on the issues and challenges that youth face in their day-to-day lives and on how we can maybe help address those issues.

I know there are many worthy candidates in various villages in my riding who could contribute to this advisory council. I would encourage them to put their names forward.

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[*Translation*]

I would also like to emphasize our government's commitment to our country's official languages. As a proud Acadian, I am well aware of the importance of ensuring that francophones across the country have access to the services they need in their community in the language of their choice.

In Nova Scotia, we fought long and hard for the right to have high-quality education in French. We got our wish thanks to the hard work of francophone Acadian representatives and activists. Unfortunately, over the past 10 years, they saw inexcusable cuts to the services offered to the francophone and Acadian minority.

More than 400 positions at the Translation Bureau disappeared; the court challenges program was cut; the budget of the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages remained more or less the same for far too long; and the Commissioner's recommendations were ignored.

I will also point out that there was no real funding increase to the road map over the past eight years. This created numerous challenges for the associations and organizations in our rural communities throughout the country. Our government is going to turn the page on that.

Following a motion moved in committee by my colleague from Ottawa—Vanier, we are currently developing some recommendations to improve and support the Translation Bureau. We have already relaunched the court challenges program, and we will be reviewing the Commissioner's recommendations.

That being said, we will not stop there. We know that francophone immigration will be a key element in sustaining those communities and ensuring their vitality.

We will also launch consultations with communities regarding the road map, in order to make the necessary changes.

• (1535)

[*English*]

In conclusion, I would like to repeat something that I have said often in this House. I am very proud to be a part of this government, a government that is delivering for Canadians.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member talked a little about young people. I count in that category, by some definitions, my two young children. I want to ask the member how he sees the issue of deficits from the perspective of young Canadians. This is present consumption on a variety of programs, some of which are very worthwhile, that has to be paid for by future generations. It means that 20 or 30 years from now when my children are working and paying taxes, those taxes will have to go for things they did not enjoy, but someone else enjoyed. How is that fair to the next generation?

Mr. Darrell Samson: Madam Speaker, the budget is an investment for Canadians. This is an opportunity to invest when interest rates are low and we are able to create job prosperity, which will in turn allow us in a very short term to pay off our debt and come back to a balanced budget.

We have to invest. I would ask members across the floor if any of them borrowed money to build a house or to buy a car. Did they borrow money? Yes, they borrowed money.

We need to have certain things in place to do what is required. This is an investment for the future. Many of these infrastructure projects need to be done. This is the time to do it, and we will benefit in the very near future from this investment.

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his speech. I am pleased to work with him on the Standing Committee on Official Languages.

He talked about what his government has done for official languages. What he forgot to mention, however, is that at this very moment, the Commissioner of Official Languages does not have enough money to fulfill his mission. This Liberal government has not invested in the commissioner's budget, nor has it invested in the road map for the next two years. That budget remains frozen, despite the demands of the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada and the Quebec Community Groups Network, just to name a couple.

If the Liberal government really believes in official languages and really wants to work on that file, why will it not say whether it will support Bill C-203, my bill, which introduces a new requirement for all judges appointed to the Supreme Court to understand Canada's two official languages, so that everyone, whether English-speaking or French-speaking, is equal before the law?

Mr. Darrell Samson: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for this question.

We have had the opportunity to discuss the official languages and what we would like to see in the future on a number of occasions.

Not long ago, the member was at the committee meeting when the Commissioner indicated that he had not requested additional funds because he was winding down some files. He would be asking for additional funding during the next budget cycle. We cannot give out money if there is no demand for it. For the time being, it is understood that there will not be a request for funds.

What our government will be getting started on shortly is the consultation of minority organizations across Canada. This consultation will help the government determine whether a five-year plan is appropriate.

As for the Supreme Court judges, I imagine the issue will be addressed soon.

• (1540)

Mr. Pierre Breton (Shefford, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would first like to congratulate my colleague on his passionate speech and his hard work on behalf of his community.

The budget tabled by our government is a breath of fresh air for the vast majority of Canadians and for the people of Nova Scotia. People across the country are excited about the investments we are making in seniors and youth, among others.

Could the hon. member give us one or two concrete examples of the impact this will have on his riding?

Government Orders

Mr. Darrell Samson: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague.

There is no doubt that the investment in youth, such as the Canada child benefit, will be extremely well received. This will be very clear in July. People are already talking about it.

The investment in education is already very significant. There are so many investments, that my colleague will not give me the time to name them all.

[*English*]

Mr. Ron Liepert (Calgary Signal Hill, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to participate in this particular debate today. Before I do so, I will say that I know there has been a lot said in this House and elsewhere about the situation in Alberta. However, it would be clearly inappropriate to not make a few comments about the heroes of Fort McMurray and northern Alberta, and also the heroes of all of Canada who have come forward with donations and with expressions of goodwill. It is important to recognize that at every opportunity we have.

I had the opportunity to speak to the budget debate about three weeks ago. I talked a bit about the situation in Alberta and about my constituents and how they were feeling at that particular time, three weeks ago. It is not a good time in Alberta. They were wondering how it could get any worse. I can say that, in the last week, it has gotten a lot worse.

However, what I did say in that particular address was that Albertans were looking for hope. I still believe that Alberta is an entrepreneurial province. We will recover, and we will in many ways use what we have been going through in the last year and certainly in the last week as a learning experience. I know we will be better for it. However, along the theme that I used in my previous remarks, I can say that in no time in our history in Alberta do I believe that there was a time when we were looking for more hope.

In preparing what I was going to say today, I like to think about things in terms of one word. What one word can describe the particular bill we are talking about, the budget that was introduced recently, and that first six months of the current government? After some thought, the one word that really came to mind was hypocrisy. When we Google hypocrisy, we see that it says “the behavior of people who do things that they tell other people not to do...” and “... people who say...thing[s] but do [something else]”. So much of what has gone on in the last six months has been exactly that, and much of it has been reflected in this particular budget and in this particular bill.

We had a campaign in October in which Canadians were promised that, first, there would be a slight deficit that the current government would run of about \$10 billion. We have seen in the budget and all of the projections that it is certainly going to be much worse than that. Second, the promise was that the books would be balanced by the end of the particular term, and we now know that has gone by the boards. Third, there was a promise to reduce the small-business tax rate. Again, the Minister of Small Business and Tourism today proudly stood in the House and talked about the small-business tax rate on January 1 being reduced. Guess who reduced that small-business tax rate. It was the previous government that put in place the bill that reduced small-business taxes on January 1, but it was the

current government that reneged on its promise to reduce taxes further. Regarding Bill C-15, hypocrisy really describes where we are.

Then I move on to how the government has acted in the last six months, and again the word hypocrisy came to mind. We have seen, as has been mentioned on many occasions in this particular short session, that the government has chosen to use closure. I know that, if the member for Winnipeg North has the opportunity to ask me a question, he will rant on about all of the times the previous government used closure. I am not suggesting for a moment that closure does not have to be used at certain instances, but what is hypocritical is that the same member for Winnipeg North, when in opposition, used to rail at the previous government about using closure; and now here we have some six months later, within a period of a few weeks, the new government using the same mechanism. I can only use that same word again, hypocrisy.

● (1545)

We also hear Liberals talking about things like openness and transparency and, again, I would say we could attribute that to hypocrisy.

I said in a speech earlier in the House that I was getting the feeling that the Minister of Natural Resources was getting a little uncomfortable because he was having to deliver a message that he probably did not necessarily believe in. When it came to pipeline discussions and the future of the energy industry, he was being directed by many environmentalists within his caucus. I did not get the feeling that he was all that comfortable delivering the message, and I still feel that way.

I would say the same thing about the Minister of Finance. I do not get the impression that the Minister of Finance is that all comfortable delivering the budget he had to deliver, with some of the things in the budget and in this particular bill, including the decision by the government to repeal what the previous government had done in terms of the age of eligibility for old age security, returning it to 65 from 67. The reason I say I do not think he feels all that good about it is that, before he was elected, he wrote a book called *The Real Retirement*. Within that book, the finance minister, before he was elected, advocated on the necessity to move old age security eligibility from 65 to 67, and here we have the same individual now delivering a budget that would repeal that.

I have a feeling that in many cases the government is sending mixed messages. Certain ministers are sending messages that I do not believe even they believe. I guess it will be a matter of time before it catches up to them.

I want to talk about one other part of the budget, which is infrastructure. We hear so much about infrastructure spending and how all of this borrowing is going to fix all of our infrastructure problems. When I look at this budget, and I mentioned this several weeks ago and will repeat it, I see we have a commitment by the government for some \$10 billion over the next two years in infrastructure spending across this country. That might sound like a lot of money when people do not know the difference between \$1 million and \$1 billion, but let me put it into context.

Government Orders

It has been a few years, but I served in the Alberta legislature for eight years, and in almost every one of those years, the provincial budget in Alberta for infrastructure was \$5 billion. It was \$5 billion for Alberta alone. We have a federal government that is allocating \$5 billion for all of Canada and is somehow taking great credit for this budget, which would plunge Canadians into debt, \$150 billion over the next four years, to not build infrastructure, because the evidence is not there. It is simply, as one of my colleagues said when the previous member was speaking, that we are putting our groceries on our credit card. That is concerning.

With those few comments, I would say that the government has invoked closure on this particular bill and when it goes to committee, as all of the bills that the government introduces do, we know Liberals will use their majority at committee to ensure there are no amendments to the bill. Being a member of the finance committee—and it will be interesting to see if the parliamentary secretary can challenge me on that—I am not expecting to see much change in this particular bill.

• (1550)

Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothesay, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague across the aisle for his speech and the version of economics from the Conservative Party.

Canadians will not forget what 10 years of regressive policies have done to them. Infrastructure is suffering right across the country. The middle class was suffering and those living in poverty and in need were hurting. That is what regressive policies do. That is what trickle-down economics and that style of economics do to Canadians. Canadians spoke in volumes on October 19 and wanted a change. The Liberal government came with progressive policies. We believe in government that is for the few—for the many, sorry, not the few.

My question for the member opposite is to ask him to explain to me how the tax-free savings account contribution limit needed to be doubled when only 4% of Canadians maximized it. I would ask that he please explain that to me.

Mr. Ron Liepert: Madam Speaker, I am not sure that was a slip of the tongue, because I would agree with him. This is a government for the few.

The facts are clear. We have the best middle class in the modern world. The middle class is doing just fine in this country, and this particular member is, I am sure, referring to the Liberals' so-called tax cut for the middle class.

If we run the numbers, they are a joke. It is a buck a day that this particular tax cut would result in for the average family. At the same time, we would be going into debt of some \$30 billion to fund an extra dollar a day for families.

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Madam Speaker, the previous government made a lot of negative changes to the employment insurance system over the last decade, and of course we see that many people in our communities are continuing to be hurt by that.

Unfortunately, the bill that has been put forward by the government does not undo some of those changes, so I want to ask the member this. Do you believe that workers in all parts of

Canada deserve fair access to employment insurance, their money, and better benefits?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am assuming you are asking through me to the member. Perfect.

The hon. member for Calgary—Signal Hill.

Mr. Ron Liepert: Madam Speaker, I am sure the hon. member is referring to the inequities that came out of this particular budget as it impacted parts of Saskatchewan, northern Alberta, and Newfoundland.

In some parts of this particular assembly, we seem to focus on things like EI. This budget should be incenting the private sector to continue to create jobs, as was the case in Alberta up until recently. The goal is to have zero people collecting EI, not continue to argue whether it is relative in a particular part of the region or not.

However, the government is going in the wrong direction. The government believes it can create jobs, and it has never been proven in the history of this country that government creates jobs; it is the private sector.

We could have cut small business taxes to create jobs in the private sector, but the Liberals chose not to do that.

• (1555)

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his great initiative in outlining the failures of the budget.

The one big failure in the budget is the lack of commitment to palliative care. The Liberals promised in their platform \$3 billion for palliative care and home care, and under the current circumstances of physician-assisted suicide, it is critical.

I wonder if my colleague would comment on that.

Mr. Ron Liepert: Madam Speaker, that has certainly been something that these particular 98 members of the House have been advocating throughout several of the debates that have taken place in this House, and I would agree with my colleague.

I do think, however, that one of the challenges the new Minister of Health will have to face is the cost of health care and how we as a country can deal with that. That is part of the whole discussion.

Hon. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is again a pleasure for me to rise to speak on this budget implementation act, but I would like to comment on what the government has been doing since it was elected.

Just now, the member opposite asked a question regarding 10 years of regressive policy. May I remind that member very simply that we were elected in 2006, elected in 2008, and we were elected in 2011 with a majority government. What is this talk about regressive policy?

Let me remind this member of a similar thing. The Liberals keep saying that we gave them a deficit. Let me tell them very clearly that at one time they were in favour of the PBO, and now they are having problems with the PBO because he said we gave them a surplus. Again, they are hiding what is really the truth.

Government Orders

Today the Prime Minister got up and said we did not understand protocol because he took his mother and his in-laws to Washington. He says that we do not understand. He is talking to somebody who has been in government for the last 10 years, and we do not understand protocol? Again, he is trying to hide this thing.

When the government came into power, the Prime Minister went on the international stage. I am talking about the international stage, because I was the parliamentary secretary for 10 years in foreign affairs. Very interestingly, he said, "Canada is back." Of course, the media took that to be something, as if the government never existed before these people came into power, but for the fact that he was sitting over there in that corner before being the Prime Minister.

Let me say this. That was an insult, not only to everybody who was looking, but, most importantly, to the hard-working foreign affairs people who have demonstrated time after time the excellent way that they run Canada's foreign policy and the objectives that the government sets out. We should be thankful to them. Yet, here is the Prime Minister going on the world stage and saying what? He says, "I am back." Inciting who? He is inciting the same officers that he is dealing with now.

Let me give an example. When the Prime Minister came into power after that, the first thing he said with respect to international development is that they will continue supporting the child maternity initiative that was done by the former government at the Muskoka conference. He wanted to continue that because that was a very good initiative. Yet, he says, "Canada is back."

Yesterday, when he went and met Melinda Gates, he said they were going to give a commitment for the global fund. May I remind these people who are telling us that Canada did not exist prior to them coming into power, that it was the former government, the former prime minister, who was with Melinda Gates and who started giving money to this project. Now they say they are continuing that project. It is the same old story. They will continue doing what we were doing, and they want to take credit for it.

During the election campaign, the Liberal Party made numerous promises. Now it is coming out that all of them have been broken. One by one by one, major promises are being broken.

However, today we are speaking about the budget, so let us talk about the budget.

We are going to do a \$10-billion budget. Well, guess what? One of the members said we can borrow at a cheap rate.

There is nothing wrong with borrowing at a cheap rate. We borrow money, but we have a plan to pay it back. Everyone has a plan to pay it back. Where is their plan to pay back this money, which is going to be a deficit of \$30 billion? There is absolutely no plan.

Then they get up, and what do they say? They said, "Yes, we are borrowing the money. Everybody does."

Let me also say this. They raised the international development budget by \$250 million. That is fair enough. Then guess what the Minister of International Development said? She said, "I'm going to use this money to help us get votes at the United Nations Security Council", which they have said they are going to fight for.

I was one of the persons in the former government who went out campaigning to get our seat. I can tell members that we stood our ground. We stood our ground, despite the fact that we were going to lose that thing.

● (1600)

We did not go out to buy votes like the Liberal government is saying it wants to do with the international development fund. That in itself is absolutely a broken promise. Where is the government going with this implementation bill?

There is another broken promise. Before I came to Parliament I was in a small business with my wife. We ran a successful dry-cleaning operation. She was the boss, and I was helping her. That is maybe why the business was successful. I was just taking care of the accounting process. The biggest issue with respect to that was that every time I dealt with the government, costs went up and up. Any time we dealt with the government for the 10 years that we were in business, the costs related to the government kept going up. That is a heavy burden for small business.

What did we do when we came into power? My good friend, the member for Beauce, undertook the initiative of how to reduce the red tape. As the Minister of Small Business was saying, small business is the driving engine of the economy.

If that is the case, let us do something for them, such as reducing the red tape and the government costs. Recognizing that, we even reduced the tax. What have the Liberals now done? They have refused to reduce the tax for small business, the driving engine of the economy.

Today, the PBO was absolutely clear with respect to the consequences of not fulfilling that promise. It will be a lack of revenue for the government, and job losses. The Liberals are saying they are presenting a budget that will create jobs. However, the PBO has said that because they did not reduce the small business tax, we will lose jobs. Therefore, the Liberals will put aside the old PBO report and carry on with the hoodwinking of the Canadian public, which is what they have been doing with their regressive policies. Who had regressive policies? Us? Forget it.

Let us be very clear about this. We will hold the Liberal government absolutely accountable. After our 10 years of experience, we left it with sound financial books. Now everyone is jumping on the Liberal bandwagon and saying that the deficit is fine.

When I was sitting over there in 2008, I remember that we went into a deficit because the G20 had agreed to go into a deficit to get the global economy out of the recession. Canada is not in a recession. Canada has its problems, but it is not in a recession, because we gave them sound financial books.

Government Orders

When I was representing Canada overseas, I remember being asked these questions repeatedly: Why is Canada's economy so sound? Why is it that the Canadian government has not had to bail out the banks? That was in 2008. It was because we had sound economic policies. The policies of the Liberal government are, as that gentleman has called it, "regressive".

Let me say this. We left the Liberal government with sound economic books. What will the Liberals now do? They will nip a bit here and there, and destroy all of that. As one of my colleagues said, our children will pay for that.

Let us go to the basics. A deficit can be used temporarily when there is a need for it. However, there was no need to do that now because we are not in a recession. When the Liberals promised to increase the deficit by \$10 billion, they should have come with a plan. I would not be surprised if the Liberal government raises the GST, which we had reduced, and places that heavy burden on Canadian taxpayers.

•(1605)

[*Translation*]

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague from Calgary Forest Lawn whether he has studied Canada's economic history at all. He talks about history, but he is not familiar with it. He should be, since the Conservative member has been here for a long time.

Conservative governments have a history of deficits, debts, cuts, and negative growth. Not once have the Conservatives managed to leave a balanced budget for their successors. They do not invest. They simply spend. There is a big difference between the two.

Has the member for Calgary Forest Lawn studied the history of previous Conservative governments, or does he simply get his facts from their advertisements?

His government left us with a \$150-billion debt, yet that money did not produce anything new. Hypocrisy is a Conservative value.

[*English*]

Hon. Deepak Obhrai: Madam Speaker, the member is now asking me where or what my government was doing. I was part of that government. We were the ones who came here and ran an efficient government that he is now trying to say we did not. What is he talking about? It is the same way that the Prime Minister stood up and said "You guys know nothing about it", when we were the government.

I know about the history. We ran a sound economic government. When we took power, the tax burden on Canadians went down.

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask my hon. colleague about some of the substance of Bill C-15. I am shocked that the government missed its mark in terms of what it identified during the election campaign. There is badly needed EI reform, which all Canadians pay into and deserve, regardless of their address.

Also, I am very disappointed with regard to the content about our veterans and how they are respected. Every year, veterans who have lost their limbs are required to prove that they have not reappeared. I

am wondering if the member agrees that this was a shocking omission from the budget.

Hon. Deepak Obhrai: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for asking an excellent question. It was better than the one from the other side.

I agree with the member. The Liberals will have to pay for the broken election promises they made. Absolutely.

On the question of EI, we are still wondering why the Prime Minister came to Alberta and gave to one region and the other region was not included. We do not understand that kind of economics. Only he can understand it. The whole province of Alberta will pay for that.

Yes, there are a lot of broken promises that the Liberal government is not going to fulfill.

•(1610)

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, one of the challenges that the member referenced in his statement today is the issue of debt and deficits. With no plan to get out of it, I am wondering what the hon. member believes the impact of that will mean, not just to Canadians for today, but generationally as well.

Hon. Deepak Obhrai: Madam Speaker, very briefly, it means higher taxes, more GST, a bigger burden on taxpayers, and a regressive economy.

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to debate Bill C-15, an act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament.

As many of my colleagues have already mentioned, this is yet another omnibus bill. Unfortunately, we came to expect omnibus bills under the Conservatives. At the time, the Liberals were highly critical of this practice. Nevertheless, they did the exact same thing with their very first budget bill. This is truly disappointing. This bill affects 30 individual acts.

For example, there will be significant changes to some acts, such as the Employment Insurance Act, which is extremely important. We spoke extensively about this act after the Conservatives unfortunately made some bad changes to it. These changes should be reversed. We also need to review the Employment Insurance Act. Unfortunately, we will not be able to study it properly, since it is part of this omnibus bill. That is very disappointing.

There are a few good things in this budget implementation bill, but there is a serious problem when it comes to fighting inequality. The budget does nothing to address major inequality issues. That is why we think it is important to split the bill. We have asked for that a number of times. We have to split the bill so that we can properly study many of its measures, such as the one on employment insurance. Unfortunately, the Liberals do not seem to be listening.

Government Orders

Of course, we are pleased that the Liberals took some of the NDP's good ideas that we came up with ages ago. For one thing, they agreed to restore the tax credit for labour-sponsored funds. That is extremely important because the credit enables workers to save money, and the labour-sponsored funds reinvest in the local economy. This is very good news for Quebec, and it is very good for regional economies. We are very pleased that they have included this NDP idea.

The NDP also worked very hard for several years to eliminate the tax on feminine hygiene products. We all know that tax was unfair and kind of sexist. We are therefore very pleased that the Liberals adopted our idea to eliminate the tax on feminine hygiene products. That is really very good news, and I know that everyone in greater Drummond will be very happy about it. This is good progress in the fight against inequality.

As members said earlier, this bill implements the budget. Canadians were really expecting real change. Unfortunately, there are a lot of broken promises in this bill. In typical Liberal fashion, the government flip-flopped on decisions and promises it had already made. I would like to share one shocking example.

Last week the Liberals voted against our motion to stop diafiltered milk from entering Canada illegally, which is hurting our dairy producers. I held a press conference on this about 10 days ago. I went to see some dairy producers in South Durham. People from Saint-Germain and right across central Quebec came to see me and told me about the financial problems this is causing. They are losing between \$15,000 and \$20,000 a year right now because of the illegal import of milk through this back-door method. Unfortunately, the Liberals did not stand up for them at all and did not vote with us to put an end to this, even though they promised during the election campaign that they would put an end to it within the first 100 days of being in power. They have been in power for over six months now.

Another thing that we are quite disappointed in is of course health care reinvestment.

●(1615)

The people of Drummond expected a significant reinvestment in health care. Unfortunately, the Liberals, just like the Conservatives, did not invest in health transfers, which is what the NDP called for and what needs to be done.

The Drummond region is getting a centre for families and children. We are investing in that. We are also working on improving palliative care. We have a centre that we are very proud of. We have this asset thanks to the generosity of the people of Drummond. We are fortunate to have the Maison René-Verrier, a palliative care facility. There are significant needs in the area of health care. Fortunately, the Drummondville community is very generous. We somehow manage to enjoy excellent care, despite everything, but we need more investments. We still have problems accessing primary care. It is really important to invest in that area. Unfortunately, we have been let down by the Liberals once again.

We asked for one thing that we really wanted, that the government invest in social housing. That is important to the people of Drummond. Right now, there is a shortage of social housing in Drummondville. Members of the executive of the municipal housing

authority in Drummondville and people throughout the region have told me many times that there is a blatant lack of investment in social housing. Right now, we need housing for seniors. We need to build new social housing for seniors in Drummondville. That is why this is extremely important. I have already asked the Liberal government about this, but I am doing it again. The government needs to quickly invest in social housing in the months and years to come because it is a very important need.

The same thing goes for green infrastructure. The Liberals have made a lot of promises regarding green infrastructure, but the communities have not yet received any money. The greater Drummond area needs money to invest in its infrastructure. This infrastructure needs to meet the criteria of tomorrow. For example, a new library is being built in Drummondville. Everyone is very happy about that. Federal funding from the excise tax transfer will be used for the new library. It will be a library of the future and, if memory serves, it will be LEED silver certified. This library will be a piece of green infrastructure. More incentives must be given so that we can continue to invest in our infrastructure.

For example, we would like to invest in a multidisciplinary centre in Saint-Germain. Once again, it would be nice if we had the funding to energy retrofit this infrastructure and make it a building for the future. We are still waiting for the programs and criteria to invest in this area.

As far as seniors are concerned, we are quite pleased. The Liberals really did a good job. They brought the age of eligibility for old age security back down to 65. That is very good. They also increased the guaranteed income supplement for single seniors. Unfortunately, we are still waiting for that to come into effect. It will happen in July, even though the Liberals said it would happen immediately. We would have liked to see that happen more quickly. Nonetheless, we are happy about it. I think it is a very good thing.

Although there are a few good measures in this bill, it is disappointing to see that it is an omnibus bill. There are a number of bills that we will not be able to debate properly because they will not be studied by the appropriate committees. They are all going to the Standing Committee on Finance. We would have liked the bill to be split. That is what we find regrettable.

●(1620)

[English]

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Intergovernmental Affairs), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened with great interest to the needs that were expressed in two areas in particular, one in the area of housing and the other in the area of infrastructure; and the frustration that the member opposite has in not receiving funds to support these two critically important programs, which finally have been spoken to with great authority in this budget.

Government Orders

Is the member aware that the lack of an agreement on infrastructure, particularly on housing, with the Government of Quebec is the primary reason why zero dollars flowed to that province? In particular, zero dollars flowed to cities like Montreal and Quebec City from infrastructure funds announced. Even though the announcements were loud and proud, the dollars were never cut and the cheques were never delivered.

Is the member aware that the failure of the previous government to get an infrastructure and housing agreement with the Province of Quebec is primarily responsible for the lack of programs in that particular province?

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Choquette: Madam Speaker, the hon. member is right to mention that the previous government failed on this. However, now it is the Liberal Party, his party, that is in power. It is time for the Liberals to stop criticizing the Conservatives and get on with investing in social housing and green infrastructure. That is what my riding expects.

It is time for the federal government to work with the Government of Quebec and the other provincial governments on concluding agreements properly and making investments. The future of our regions depends on it.

[*English*]

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his comments today. Certainly, he pointed out his concern about the lack of funding for palliative care, and I deeply share his concern about that, especially in light of the current conversation that we are having on physician-assisted suicide. To not offer palliative care in the face of the possibility of offering physician-assisted suicide is unconscionable.

However, my question is regarding the issue of small business taxes. I wonder if my colleague is hearing from his constituents regarding the lack of support for small business, especially in the face of the broken promise that the Liberal government has made in terms of reducing those taxes.

The other question I have is in regard to the support for our rural communities. Agriculture is virtually absent, totally absent from the throne speech and virtually absent from the budget. I wonder if my colleague shares those concerns.

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Choquette: Madam Speaker, my colleague mentioned a number of things. I very much enjoyed sitting with him on the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development in recent years. We never agreed, but we always enjoyed it.

The palliative care issue is very disappointing. There is currently a major debate on medical assistance in dying. The government absolutely must invest in palliative care. There is a crucial need for it in the greater Drummond area. The private sector is doing a lot of work in this area at present, but the government must also assume some responsibility.

Agriculture is a total disappointment. A motion concerning diafiltered milk was moved last week. I met with a few dozen

farmers and dairy producers, who shared with me their disappointment at the government's inaction, which they cannot understand.

However, it is very simple. There is really no need for a new bill; we just need to clarify the rules. Diafiltered milk is milk, and it should not be crossing the border. The government must take responsibility. What the government is currently doing for our regions and agriculture is really disappointing.

[*English*]

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his very thorough review of what his constituents require, and I can echo that as a voice from Alberta, including for the dairy farmers and the egg and chicken producers, who just met with me and expressed the same concerns.

However, Cheng Hoon Lim, the head of the IMF's annual review of Canada's economic performance, has raised a concern that the Liberal government is failing to take real action on child care. The review says that putting money into child care is going to help women get employed, and that is going to improve our labour productivity. Would the member like to speak to that?

• (1625)

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Choquette: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for the work she does in her province. I know that she works very hard and she is very much appreciated.

We had a national child care plan. Unfortunately, the Liberal government did not put forward any such plan. That was very disappointing because it would provide day care spaces at a reasonable cost.

[*English*]

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today to speak to the budget implementation act and talk about the end of fiscal prudence in Canada as we know it.

We are looking at a budget this time around that talks about big deficits, a deficit of over \$30 billion has been suggested. This is in light of the fact that the previous government, during one of the worst economic recessions in history, was able to go from being in deficit back to surplus positions, not one year but two years, and ahead of the schedule that was previously planned.

As we know, the Department of Finance is reporting that up until the end of February 2016, there is a \$7.5 billion surplus on the books of the Government of Canada. Yet the Liberal government is projecting a deficit of over \$5 billion by the end of March. Is this March madness? What are the Liberals spending the money on? We are talking about rolling dollars out the door faster than we can throw spaghetti at the wall. Those guys are really moving pretty damned fast to spend money.

Government Orders

We have to look at this in context. This is the biggest budget in Canadian history at \$311 billion. It is by far the most spending we have ever seen on things that are not necessarily important to Canadians. It is also the most revenue the government has ever taken in at over \$282 billion. If we compare that to when the Conservative Party was in government, revenues and expenditures somewhere around \$250 billion. Therefore, we are talking about huge increases in revenues and even faster growth in spending by the Liberal government.

This will result in more taxation. Through this budget, taxes will rise over the next five years. From personal income tax and corporate income tax, we will generate another \$5 billion, so that is more money coming out of the pockets of taxpayers. Every time we increase taxes, we stymie growth.

The people of my riding of Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman are extremely disappointed with the budget. Small business operators, the mom and pop stores up and down the main streets of the over 70 communities in my riding, are the ones who are paying the price.

First, they had a guarantee from the previous government that the small business tax rates would move down to 9%. Now they have now been frozen at 10.5%. They were counting on this money to grow their businesses and hire more people.

As well, the Liberals took away the small business hiring tax credit. The ability to employ people in our rural communities has dissipated because of the callous move by the Liberals and the way they are treating small business operators.

We need to remember that over 90% of businesses in Canada are small business operators, and they employ two-thirds of all Canadians. If we do not support them, we will not get the opportunity to have a prosperous economy.

I want to talk about agriculture, but unfortunately there was absolutely nothing in the budget for agriculture. We did not see any move forward in trying to improve research opportunities, a commitment to conclude the trade agreements that our previous government started in Europe and the states. I know our farmers are also small business operators. A lot of them have incorporated to take advantage of these small business tax rates. According to the Liberals, they will not get the benefit from it the way they would have if it had been a Conservative government.

Families in my riding are extremely disappointed. These people really relied on things like family income splitting. They loved having the educational tax credit. They loved having the family tax credits for sports and arts. Those families that have their kids enrolled in hockey, in soccer, in music, in dance will no longer have the generous tax credits they enjoyed under the Conservative government. All that is washed away and their net take home has been diminished.

● (1630)

People in my riding are very disappointed that the Liberals are removing the balanced budget legislation. This is necessary to compel the government to try to balance the books and to ensure that it looks out for not just its own interests but the interests of future generations that will have to pay off this national debt that the government continues to accumulate. We know we have to do the

right things to encourage growth, and that means we need to have balanced books. If we are to have preferential tax rates, preferential exchange rates, and preferential lending rates, we need a solid financial picture from the federal government.

I remember when Pierre Elliott Trudeau was prime minister. We saw interest rates in our country skyrocket. I know this for a fact because I bought my first section of farmland in 1984 and my interest rates were 21.5% because of the incredible high debt load that the government of the day had undertaken and the lack of confidence the financial institutions and the world economy had in Canada. We had high tax rates and terrible exchange rates. I fear the current Liberal government may go down that path again, which really would not help us stimulate our economy, create jobs, and have economic prosperity.

In my role as the official opposition critic for defence, I want to touch on the \$3.7-billion cuts to the Department of National Defence. This was the only department that did not see an increase to its budget. I love this quote from David Perry, who is with the Canadian Global Affairs Institute: “This budget reminds me of that episode of Oprah where everybody in the audience got a car... Everybody got a car here except the Department of Defence”. Everybody seems to have a net increase in spending across the board, except the Department of National Defence. This is why we cannot have budgets that are not balanced. Ultimately people love to cut national defence projects.

Hon. John McKay: What do you know about balanced budgets?

Mr. James Bezan: The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence wants to chirp at me, Madam Speaker. He was sitting in government during the decade of darkness under the Liberals. He knows very effectively how to cut defence spending. Unfortunately, he is in a position now to be advising the minister and the government on how to cut defence spending again.

We have seen that these cuts have been made, \$3.7 billion, and we know the Canadian Armed Forces needs equipment to do the jobs that we task it with.

Government Orders

Here are some of the details. The Liberals have cut spending on the Arctic offshore patrol ships by \$173 million. For investments in the future fighter aircraft that we need to replace the CF-18s, \$109 million has been withheld. We are just finally getting to a place where we can retire the Sea King helicopters, and replace them with the Cyclone maritime helicopters, which the previous Conservative government brought into Canada. The Liberals have gone and reduced the operational budget for the Cyclones by \$90 million. The Liberals have taken the Halifax-class modernization/frigate life extension and have cut \$71 million from there. As well, we have already heard how they cut \$39 million from the integrated soldier protection system. That communications and personnel protection unit is critical to our soldiers who are going into harm's way, those who are right now serving in Iraq.

Unfortunately, we have a situation where our Department of National Defence budget has been cut. We need to continue to tool and kit out our soldiers, our aircrew, and our sailors who serve in the Canadian Armed Forces, the Royal Canadian Air Force, and the Royal Canadian Navy so they have the ability to do their jobs in protecting Canada and projecting our influence on the world stage on issues that are important to us.

I just want to quote the parliamentary budget officer, who clearly showed that the Liberals have a history of doing this. In his 2015 report, he said:

The most significant budget cuts under program review occurred from 1995 to 2004...The cumulative defence expenditure over that period of time was roughly \$13.4 billion below what our modelling showed was required to maintain the existing force structure.

Back then it was called the decade of darkness. I sure hope we are not entering another era of Liberal darkness for the Canadian Armed Forces.

• (1635)

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am happy to hear my colleague remembers the price of land he purchased back in 1984. Does the hon. member remember the \$1.19 billion cuts in defence spending in 2012 under his government?

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Speaker, it took a lot of hard work to repair the damage the previous Liberal government did under the decade of darkness. Defence spending stagnated at \$10 billion per year during the decade of darkness. When we took office, we took it from \$14 billion a year to over \$20 billion a year. Unfortunately here we are today still talking about a \$20 billion expenditure for the Canadian Armed Forces.

Under departmental programs, it looks like a big number, but other partners in the NATO alliance are spending much more than that on a percentage of GDP. The NATO goal is that every nation should spend somewhere around 2%. It is an aspirational goal of 2% of GDP. This year we are sitting at 0.9% of GDP being spent on national defence. That unfortunately is not enough for what we need to do to protect our brave men and women and to protect our sovereignty.

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is extremely disconcerting that the government would produce a budget basically void of any details on palliative care,

especially in light of Bill C-14. It is extremely important we have these enhanced details.

Would the member agree that this is a glaring error in how we move forward responsibly with the budget?

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Speaker, we need to have more palliative care across the country and we need to improve what we already have. I have recommitted myself to this in light of our discussions on physician-assisted death. My wife is a nurse in personal care. She does palliative care. We live it on a daily basis. We know that palliative care is lacking resources.

The Liberals promised during the election campaign that they would provide more resources for palliative care across the country. Unfortunately that is another broken promise, as the Liberals seem to prove over and over again. There are so many broken promises that Wellington Street is being paved with them right now.

Mr. David Sweet (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague talked about the decade of darkness and the cuts in military spending. Sometimes Canadians do not understand just how much that impacts us at home, how much it impacts manufacturing, how much it impacts the hundreds of reservists in the greater city of Hamilton, in a riding I represent in that area, and how it would affect us during national disasters when we would need to call on our own military.

Would my colleague expand on just how much this will impact the average Canadian on a day-to-day basis?

• (1640)

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Speaker, this impacts various things.

There are a lot of industries right across the country that provide a lot of equipment for the military. This includes industries in my riding of Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman and in the city of Winnipeg, especially in the aerospace sector. Those industries are providing jobs. The rhetoric coming from the Liberal government right now indicates that it is going to cancel the F-35 contract. In Winnipeg alone there are a number of operations that are being undertaken in building components of the F-35. Magellan Aerospace employs over 400 people. If the government cancels the F-35, 400 people in Winnipeg could lose their jobs.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): 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 Regina—Lewvan, Employment Insurance; the hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith, Indigenous Affairs; and the hon. member for Trois-Rivières, Housing.

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to debate Bill C-15, the Liberal government's budget implementation act. I doubt it will come as much of a surprise to the House that I will be voting against this budget implementation act.

When I examine any piece of legislation, first and foremost, I look at how it will impact the citizens, taxpayers, and employers in my riding. I can say right off the top that this budget amounts to a tax increase on the hard-working families and taxpayers in my riding of Perth—Wellington.

Government Orders

If we examine part 1 alone of this budget implementation act, we see tax increases. We see the elimination of the education tax credit, the elimination of the textbook tax credit, the cancellation of the children's arts tax credit, the cancellation of the children's fitness tax credit, gone is income splitting for families and with it the family tax cut, gone is the universal child care benefit, gone are so many programs that helped, benefited, and provided real value to hard-working Canadian families.

It is tax increase after tax increase after tax increase. With each of these increases, the Liberal government is making it harder and harder for families to make ends meet.

If I look at my own community of Perth—Wellington, it is home to some of this country's premier cultural and artistic attractions. It is home to the Stratford Festival, North America's largest classical repertory theatre. It has Drayton Entertainment, which has seven venues across the region, providing excellent entertainment options. It has Stratford Summer Music, which over six weeks will provide a wide variety of diverse talent, ranging from the Harlem Gospel Choir to Whisky Jack.

It is an honour to live in such a diverse, culturally rich community and I want more young people to get involved in the arts and culture. I want more young people to have the opportunity to take piano or dance lessons or learn the art of the stage. Under the former Conservative government, they could do that through the children's arts tax credit. In 10, 15, 20 years from now, I hope we will see some of the great artists and actors who grace our stages, some of the great musicians who perform in venues across the country. I hope to see these great talents and be able to say that they exist because we as a country and a community encouraged them to excel in the arts.

I have some of my own vivid memories from my childhood. Granted, my childhood was not quite as long ago as some of my colleagues' were, but I do have some vivid memories of my childhood. Among those great memories was learning to play a variety of musical instruments as a member of the Mitchell Legion Band. Learning to play a musical instrument was one of my great passions in life and being able to do that as a member of the band was a great opportunity.

I remember playing soccer behind Upper Thames Elementary School. I remember taking swimming lessons at the Mitchell Lions Pool. I can now more fully appreciate the sacrifices that my own parents made in ensuring that all four of their children learned to play a musical instrument and had the opportunity to participate in fitness and sports activities, like swimming lessons.

Now, as a father myself, with one young daughter and a second kid on the way in a matter of days or weeks, I want to some day see my kids play soccer, learn to swim, and participate in these culturally rich activities. In an era where we see an alarming rise in childhood obesity, I truly think this Liberal bill is taking us down the wrong road. Let us, as a community and a country, encourage a healthy future generation, not work against one.

• (1645)

[*Translation*]

This bill would also represent a tax hike for small businesses. For each of the next three years the tax rate on small businesses will be

increased by half of a percentage point. By 2018, small businesses will be paying 1.5% more in taxes.

We all know the importance of small businesses to the Canadian economy. In 2011, small businesses represented roughly 30% of Canada's GDP. Small businesses are not tax havens for the rich. Small business owners are simply trying to pay their fair share and provide jobs for our communities. The Minister of Small Business and Tourism was even instructed in her mandate letter to lower the small business tax rate. Instead, we see just another broken promise.

The government's own finance department says this tax increase on small businesses will cost them \$2.2 billion over the next four years. Their own officials acknowledge this tax increase will only further burden small businesses in Canada.

I am proud that the Conservative government created 1.3 million net new jobs after the recession. Most of those jobs were full-time and in the private sector and were created despite the worst economic recession since the 1930s.

Another element of Bill C-15 that is very concerning is the repeal of the Federal Balanced Budget Act. This act was brought in to protect Canadian taxpayers by ensuring that federal governments do not return to the days of unnecessary deficits, as in the 1970s.

The Prime Minister might not understand the importance of a balanced budget, but Canadian families do. Canadians know how to live within their means. Working Canadians have mortgages, transportation costs, day care expenses, and many other expenses. They are responsible for ensuring that these expenses stay in line with their income.

Unfortunately, the government is not reflecting these values and is spending far beyond its means. This is unsustainable, this is irresponsible, and this will have serious long-term impacts. Quite frankly, it is galling that the Liberals take such glee in returning to deficit.

The facts are against this government. The parliamentary budget officer has confirmed that the Liberals were left with a surplus, and their own officials at Finance Canada have confirmed that they were left with a surplus. Every credible authority has accepted this. The only people who have not accepted this are the Liberals across the way.

Only months into its mandate, the Liberal government broke a major campaign promise to limit the deficit. The leader of the Liberal Party said they would run modest deficits of \$10 billion. However, in his first budget, the Minister of Finance introduced a deficit of \$30 billion. There is no other way to put it: this is another broken promise.

What makes this even more concerning is that the government has no plan to return to balanced budgets. During the campaign, the Liberals told Canadians that they would return to balanced budgets within their term.

Government Orders

The Minister of Finance is projecting deficits for at least the next five years. The government has shown no plan to return to balanced budgets.

[*English*]

The Minister of Finance has said one thing that is entirely accurate and that is that we as Conservatives on this side of the House are stuck on this balanced budget thing. Who else is stuck on this balanced budget thing? It is Canadian taxpayers, my constituents in Perth—Wellington, those who on a monthly basis have to budget and balance their own pocketbooks, their own monthly expenses and revenues, so they do not spend more than they take in. They know that in the long run they cannot spend more than they bring in.

I am proud to be voting against the budget. It takes away valuable tax credits. It breaks the Liberals' own promise to lower taxes on small business. It takes on billions in unnecessary and long-term debt. This is the wrong budget for the people of Perth—Wellington, and it is not the budget that Canadians need.

• (1650)

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary for Sport and Persons with Disabilities, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his French.

[*Translation*]

I would like to thank my colleague for his fine effort. I would also like to congratulate him on his speech.

My colleague opposite talked about tax credits in the first part of his speech. He even mentioned that we are fostering obesity in youth by cutting tax credits.

I would like to say that we chose to give back the tax credit to families. Nine out of 10 families will have more money in their pockets. They will be able to register their children in sports. We support children's physical fitness.

Just last month, I registered my daughter for soccer. Does it make sense for an MP to receive a tax credit for his child considering his salary?

Mr. John Nater: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member from Quebec for his question.

I think it is important for government programs to be universal, that is, to be accessible to all Canadians.

For example, it is important for parents to be able to take advantage of a tax credit when they sign their kids up for fitness or sports activities. I think such a tax credit is important, especially when you look at the results of obesity tests.

[*English*]

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to put a question to this member that I put previously to one of the Liberal members relating to the IMF review on Canada that has just occurred. It raised a number of concerns, including record-high household debt and high housing costs, but it indicated particular concern over an area that the member's party, when in government, also did not take action on; that is, greater federal support to child care. The IMF has said that in Canada and elsewhere it has been a statistically significant positive effect on

labour productivity when women enter the workforce and what they need is access to affordable child care.

Would he agree with that?

Mr. John Nater: Madam Speaker, I might begin by saying, just in case there is any confusion, I do not have any taxpayer-funded nannies. My daughter is in day care, Perth Care for Kids, and we pay for those expenses out of our own pocket, as I think most Canadians would expect to be normal and reasonable.

I think it is important that we encourage all members of society, particularly women in society, to have the advantages necessary to return to the workforce if they so choose. I know in my particular situation, my wife was a nurse prior to giving birth to our first child and she made the decision not to return to work at this time, to put that off, and take the opportunity to raise her own children, but that is a decision that we made. We need to ensure that all Canadian families have the opportunity to make the choices that are right for their families, including being able to allow women to return to the workforce after giving birth, which is why I was so proud of the universal child care benefit, which applied to all Canadian families and did not pick and choose those who got it.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for a great job on his comments today. My colleague is my next-door neighbour in riding and probably has the honour of having the second-best agricultural riding in the country.

I wonder if he would comment on the lack of support for actual farmers and small businesses in this particular budget?

• (1655)

Mr. John Nater: Madam Speaker, Perth—Wellington is the heartland of Canadian agriculture. We have the most dairy farmers of any riding in the country and some of the most fertile farmland.

It is disappointing that the budget and the Liberal government's Speech from the Throne has all but ignored the importance of Canadian agriculture. However, there is, as I said before, one thing that the Liberal government can do to help Canadian farmers, and that would be to ratify the trans-Pacific partnership.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would first like to take this opportunity to send my thoughts to the people of Fort McMurray. A close friend of my husband lives there, and we all watched in terror as this happened, worrying about the well-being of all the people who were fleeing. It is moments like this that remind us to be grateful for all those we hold dear. It is a reminder of the privilege it is to give when the need arises, and to receive when the hard parts of life happen. I thank all those who have given during this painful time.

Today, the House stands to debate Bill C-15. Budgets are about setting priorities and confirming commitments made, and today I want to discuss some serious concerns I have about the budget.

Government Orders

Bill C-15 is 179 pages long. It amends more than 30 statutes and contains another bill, Bill C-12, which is on the Order Paper before the House of Commons. Now, the time of debate has been shortened. A promise of the Liberal government was transparency and openness. The bill before us has multiple complexities, which include repealing an entire act, retroactive legislation changes, and much more. This alone lessens the capacity for focused discussion in the House, and with a shortened timeline, there is less time for discussion of these important issues.

The people of North Island—Powell River have shared with me their concerns with omnibus bills, and with Bill C-15, the government is going in a direction that concerns many Canadians. I hope this is not what real change looks like.

I know that many people in my riding will feel some relief with the child tax benefit. It is a start; however, I also know that many of my constituents are looking for a real child care strategy.

When I travel in my riding, I am sad to hear the stories of many women who have had to leave their work, because they cannot afford day care. They shared with me their concern that they would miss out on opportunities for their careers. One woman said to me that she just wanted to feel she had a choice in the matter. She loves her children, wants to spend meaningful time with them, and wants to have a career that promises a future for her family. However, the budget does not provide any support for the affordability of child care, nor does it address the reality that there are few day care spaces available.

I talk with single parents who are stranded without the supports for the child care they desperately need. More money in their pocket would provide some support, but if there are no child care spaces available, that is not a solution. Canadians are looking for a comprehensive strategy around child care, and the budget before us does not give it to them.

Veterans are also being shortchanged by the lack of mental health support, and there is nothing for suicide prevention. Veterans affairs have been badly mishandled by the past Conservative and Liberal governments. Pensions have been clawed back, and front-line service cuts have increased wait times for help and access to quality home care, while long-term care is shrinking. Soldiers with PTSD face months of delays before even getting referred for help, and even then, that help is hard to get.

A man from my riding, Dan Thomas, came to see me several weeks ago. A retired soldier with severe PTSD, he talked about how invisible he felt with his long-term issues. He shared with me the helplessness of not being able to receive the support he so desperately requires for his day-to-day life. When people serve their country, they should not feel invisible.

Bill C-12 was tabled in the House of Commons on March 24. The way veterans were treated by the previous government was indeed shameful. They deserve to have this legislation that would affect them discussed in the House, and not a unilateral decision by the current government. By killing Bill C-12 and incorporating it in this omnibus bill, the Liberals have chosen not to make space to listen to veterans' grievances and are playing politics.

Opening the service centres is one step, but it is not the only step required. What concerns me is that Bill C-12 largely fails to provide much-needed supports for mental health or increase support for spouses or caregivers of injured veterans.

We owe it to the men and women who have served our country courageously and honourably to ensure a proper study of these benefit changes to make sure they will address the needs of our veterans. We do not want to see veterans continue to be forced to prove that the leg they lost has not grown back.

● (1700)

This omnibus bill should be split up so that the changes to veterans' benefits receive proper study by Parliament. It is important that we serve those people who have served us so well.

After nearly a decade of Conservative economic mismanagement, middle-class families are working harder than ever yet falling further and further behind. At a time when Canada needs a government that will combat rising inequality, the Liberals' first budget is inadequate.

The Liberals are breaking their promise to reduce the tax rate for small and medium-sized enterprises, the biggest job creators in Canada. They are cancelling the legislation that allowed for any subsequent reductions provided in the bill. However, they made a commitment to lower the rate to 9% by 2019. New Democrats have been fighting for a long time for tax cuts for small businesses, which are the real job creators in Canada.

The Liberals have rejected our proposals to cap transaction fees for credit cards, and are doing nothing to facilitate the transfer of family businesses between generations. This is a direct betrayal of small business owners and will significantly reduce job creation in Canada. The parliamentary budget officer estimates that this cancellation would cost SMEs more than \$2.1 billion over the next four years. Meanwhile, consecutive Liberal and Conservative governments have given massive tax giveaways to Canada's most profitable corporations. The Liberals should keep their promise to small businesses by withdrawing the proposal to cancel legislated reductions in the small business tax rate.

More than a quarter of seniors are living in poverty, and some Canadians are wondering whether they will have a secure income when they retire. We welcome the Liberals' recommitment to returning the age of eligibility for old age security and the guaranteed income supplement to 65. We also welcome their recommitment to increase the GIS for single seniors. However, we are disappointed that seniors have to wait until July, despite the Liberals' promise to help them immediately.

Government Orders

This is a useful start, but more can be done. Increasing the GIS by 10% for all seniors would lift nearly 150,000 additional people out of poverty. Income data shows that the median income for single seniors without employer pension income is below \$20,000. With the low income measure for a single senior at \$22,000 per year, this is unacceptable. I can tell members that there are many seniors in my riding who are living well below \$20,000 a year. I have seniors in my riding who, in January, debate whether to purchase medication or keep their heat on. That is not a good debate for seniors who have worked so hard to create this beautiful country we have. These changes should be closely studied to see how we can improve them to help even more seniors, not pushed through in an omnibus bill. The government needs to keep its promise to immediately enhance the CPP.

Last week in this House I spoke to Bill C-14, medical assistance in dying. The bill refers to palliative care in its preamble, yet while introducing this bill the government made no new commitments to palliative care. We have a critically important opportunity to enhance services across the country, yet the government was missing in action on palliative care in the budget, even after promising \$3 billion for home care during the campaign. Holding the government to account on the promise of that motion remains one of our top priorities as we assist in the legislative response to the Carter decision.

In my riding, there are many seniors. Home care and palliative care are of huge concern. Seniors living in remote communities want to hear from the government that they matter, that staying in their home is a priority. Many constituents have shared stories of feeling pushed to leave not only their home but their community for health concerns. Accessible services in my remote communities are important.

I cannot support this budget. It does not fulfill the promises made to Canadians. It has some positive steps, but leaves out too many key concerns that would make the lives of my constituents better. Whether it be actual dollars or respecting the process, this budget fails to follow through.

• (1705)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I do find it unfortunate that the member concluded her remarks by saying that she is not going to be supporting the budget implementation bill.

She should be very much aware that this is a progressive budget that would really have a profoundly positive impact on Canadians from every region of the country. We can talk about the Canada child benefit program, which would literally lift hundreds of thousands of children out of poverty. We can talk about the middle-class tax break, which would save hundreds of millions of dollars, or put those hundreds of millions of dollars into the pockets of Canadians.

With those two initiatives alone, what we would do is increase disposable income. In other words, we would provide customers for small businesses in every region of the country.

We would invest in infrastructure. We would invest in our seniors through the guaranteed income supplement.

My question for the member is this. Would she not recognize that this is in fact one of the most progressive pieces of legislation enabling our middle class that we have seen in the last decade?

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Madam Speaker, just saying something is progressive does not make it so.

The reality is that we are the progressive opposition, and we are here to remind the government that middle class does not start at \$45,000 a year. There are people in my riding who are surviving every single day on less than \$20,000. They are fighting every single day to survive.

It is very disrespectful to not look at their needs and make sure we are there for them when they need us. The government must do better.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to reference, just for a minute, the member for Winnipeg North and his comments from earlier today when he said that this budget is largely a fulfillment of the Liberal platform.

It was funny enough to listen to him, but what was really sad was to see that he actually kept a straight face while he was saying that. We know that the small deficit the Liberals promised of \$10 billion, the small business tax reduction, and the promise of palliative care, none of these are in the budget.

I want to ask a question for my colleague. I thank her for highlighting the need for improved palliative care, especially in light of the current conversation around physician-assisted suicide. How are the member's constituents responding to her in terms of the lack of palliative care, when at the same time we are talking about actually offering, to patients who request it, physician-assisted dying, where there is no palliative care available? Where is the choice?

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Madam Speaker, I share the concern that there is not adequate palliative care.

We know we have an aging population. We know we need to plan for a future when people are going to be facing multiple challenges.

We need to see an investment in home care, so we can keep people in their homes and keep them healthy and strong as long as we can. We need to make sure that, when the time comes, the services are there. When the time comes that anybody has to make a decision for themselves, I hope we have the services that are adequate to do it in a respectful way.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I could certainly echo the same concerns with this budget from my riding.

I put the question to the Liberals. I put the question to the Conservatives. I am wondering if she would like to respond to it. Even the IMF thinks that the progressive thing to do is to invest more in child care so that women can enter the workforce and increase productivity.

Would the member like to speak to what the IMF is calling on the government to do?

Government Orders

• (1710)

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Madam Speaker, absolutely, I feel we need to have a strategy around child care across this country.

I believe the federal government should be taking leadership and working with its counterparts in the provinces and territories to make a strategy that makes sense.

The reality is that affordable child care makes a difference. It means women can afford to go back to work, or to have the opportunity to grow their own business. I know that, for the women in my riding, it would mean a real opportunity.

I also think it is important to remember that it is often women who make this sacrifice. It is a wonderful thing. I myself stayed home with my children for the first seven years. It was a huge gift to me and my family, and we struggled for it, but it was something I really felt was important. However, this is the point, as the member said. In my riding they need to feel they have a choice. Affordable child care gives families a choice.

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak to the budget implementation and the government's objective to diminish private economic activity through the reckless spending of public money.

Before I get there, permit me to provide a bit of information on the province I call home, as it seems from this budget that both the Minister of Employment and the Minister of Finance appear to be unfamiliar with where and what Saskatchewan is.

Saskatchewan is a landlocked province. It represents 7% of the land mass of Canada and has 10% of its fresh water. Saskatchewan is a cartographer's delight, as its borders are all parallels and meridians. There are two major natural regions, the Canadian Shield in the north, and the Interior Plains in the south. We have over 11% of the rail network, and the largest network of secondary roads in Canada.

In Saskatchewan, we are mighty familiar with sunny ways, as we receive more hours of sunshine per year than any other province. We also understand the deception, that sunny ways does not necessarily mean warmth. Some people think our winters can be bitterly cold.

With 3% of Canada's population, Saskatchewan contributes 4.5% to the GDP. Our GDP per capita contribution is \$28,000 more than Quebec, which has seven times our population. Since 2007, we have also become a net contributor to the equalization scheme. Despite the provincial economy that is experiencing challenges due to decreases in world oil prices, we are forecast to contribute a further \$1.7 billion, or 10% of equalization transfers for our fellow Canadians to the east.

In Saskatchewan, we have a very diversified economy, much of which was not recognized in the borrow-and-spend budget. Saskatchewan is often referred to as the bread basket, due to its producing 47% of the wheat grown in Canada. Along with peas, soybeans, lentils, flax, barley and canola, Saskatchewan is able to contribute to feeding both Canadians and the world through exporting these crops. These farms are small businesses, which the budget betrays by not reducing the small business taxes promised by the Liberals during the election.

Beyond its size, the agriculture industry in Saskatchewan has actively participated in modern agriculture techniques that are highly technologically advanced; help produce larger, more nutrient-rich crops; help maintain soil conditions; and help sequester greenhouse gas emissions like CO₂, methane, and nitrous oxide.

Modern farming techniques contribute to a dichotomy between the ability to feed vast numbers of people, thereby reducing starvation, and the role of food production as carbon sinks in climate mitigation. Agricultural producers in Saskatchewan are very cognizant of the negatives of natural and man-made CO₂, and continue to work diligently to adopt zero tillage, organic farming practices, and the development of crops that require less water to grow.

In place of flying in jets to hobnob with environmentalists from around the world and promising to reduce emissions by government fiat, Saskatchewan's agriculture producers are taking a proactive role in reducing emissions through their actions.

In Saskatchewan, we work hard to both provide economic activity and to ensure that we are stewards of the land and resources.

In my riding of Souris—Moose Mountain, we have over 300 years of proven coal reserves. We use this coal to generate electricity, which meets 50% of Saskatchewan's electricity requirements.

While the government wants to shut down the coal industry because it is dirty and pollutes the environment, in Saskatchewan we came up with a less radical plan. Rather than shutting down the coal plants, losing millions of dollars of economic activity, and throwing thousands of people out of work, we instead invested \$1.4 billion in an innovative carbon capture project, to which the previous Conservative government contributed \$250 million.

The carbon capture project cleans the CO₂ particulates produced from using coal for electrical power. While this continued use of fossil fuels is an anathema to environmentalists, the project at Boundary Dam is designed to remove the equivalent of pollution emitted by 250,000 automobiles per year. In fact, in the month of March 2016, over 83,000 tonnes of CO₂ were captured, the equivalent of 700 cars per day being off the road.

The CO₂ is sold to an oil company which uses it to stimulate oil and gas wells to improve its productivity while reducing the use of chemicals and water, which are also used to stimulate oil production. It is also sequestered miles underground.

• (1715)

This is technology that can be used around the world for coal generation plants that continue to meet the needs of electricity requirements of more than 50% of the world's population. This is innovation. This is infrastructure. This is green technology. This creates jobs.

Government Orders

Carbon capture is not a perfect system, but we take a measured approach in Saskatchewan. This is proving to be a less disruptive solution to reducing CO₂ emissions than simply shutting coal-powered generation facilities with nothing to replace that source of electricity.

I am sure that those who believe that *The Flintstones* is a documentary, and who continue to burn fossil fuels to attend conferences around the world to discuss how to shut down the fossil fuel industry, are appalled by this approach. However, it sure beats their alternative of economic disruption, massive unemployment, and, as has been experienced in Ontario, huge increases in electricity costs. This will harm businesses and individuals by increasing the energy costs by over 70% in the next 10 years.

The Liberals talk a good game about growing the economy and environmental protection. In my riding, we also produce lots of oil. Moosomin, Saskatchewan is the proposed jumping off point for the proposed energy east pipeline to transport oil produced in Saskatchewan, North Dakota, and Alberta across Canada to refineries and ports in the Atlantic provinces. This would remove millions of barrels of oil from being transported by rail across the country and through communities. The government response to this huge influx of private capital into infrastructure has been to dither and delay.

The government provided nothing in the budget for a proposal from a resident in my riding, which was supported by Premier Wall, to engage out-of-work oil workers in oil sites reclamation projects. Instead, the Prime Minister came to Saskatchewan and told us that we should be happy that the downturn in energy prices has not hit us harder. I am not sure how to explain that to an oil field services company that has had to lay off 22 of its 26 employees. There are no job-creating strategies within this budget.

While an American oil company proceeds with building a 50,000 barrel-per-day refinery in North Dakota, a few miles south of my riding, we study and delay \$15 billion of private money to expand a transportation system for Canadian-produced oil. I am not sure why sunny ways should make us glad that our biggest competitor in the oil industry in North America generates employment and economic activity while we equivocate and utter meaningless bromides.

Over the past 40 years, a fairly consistent cycle of activity has been followed in the oil fields in southeast Saskatchewan. Oil workers stop work for two to three months in the spring while the land thaws. Some of these workers take up part-time work in the agriculture sector during seeding, or apply for employment insurance while they wait for work in the oil industry to resume. With the changes in the oil industry and lack of encouragement for the industry by the government, instead of applying for employment insurance, these oil workers are simply giving up. Again, I am not sure why we should be glad in Saskatchewan that the government has no idea where the oil field is and refuses to extend, by a few weeks, the access to employment insurance in the oil fields of southeast Saskatchewan.

Saskatchewan is a province that is very dependent upon the export of our products and services. The TPP agreement, entered into with 12 other Pacific countries, provides an opportunity for ranchers, architects, manufacturers, food producers, education and health

workers, and all the other sectors of Saskatchewan's diverse economy, to have access to wider markets. Removing tariffs on cattle, canola, honey and other agriculture products, and allowing for the unimpeded movement of professionals, is nothing but great for the Saskatchewan economy. The positive impact of this agreement was ignored in the budget, and the government seems to be sending signals that it is unsure if it wants to participate with countries representing 40% of the world's trade.

In conclusion, Saskatchewan is an important contributor to the well-being of the Canadian economy. We have a way of life that allows individuals and communities to grow, to contribute to the image of Canadians all around the world as fair-minded, honest, and law-abiding people. The indifference of the Prime Minister to the challenges of those employed in the fossil fuel industry, the uncertainty of the government's actions with respect to privately funded national infrastructure programs, and the lack of commitment in supporting free trade agreements is causing concern among the many industries and communities in Saskatchewan. They are being left with an impression that the federal government is more intent on attacking the way of life we have developed than in providing support, leadership, and a commitment to improving the function and future of our community.

• (1720)

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I find it interesting to hear what my friends say from other regions across the country. It gives me different perspectives to learn about. I was particularly interested in what the member raised about farming and organic farming, and the steps that are being taken in Saskatchewan to support sustainable agriculture. I am wondering if he could perhaps share a bit more, as he kind of glanced over it. I would love to hear his thoughts about how making investments in green technologies and in science to support having sustainable agriculture may assist people in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Robert Kitchen: Madam Speaker, as I mentioned, the backbone in Saskatchewan and in my riding is the agriculture industry. It sustains and keeps things surviving. Right now, we are hurting in our province because of the downturn of the oil industry.

However, our agriculture industry has advanced in learning agriculture practices of reducing tillage, moving crops around so we can put nitrogens, etc., back into the earth, and using products that use less water to sustain the industry. These farmers need a market to move that to, because I am in a part of the world where we have to export everything.

Government Orders

For so long in Saskatchewan, and in my riding, we have been exporting our people. We have exports of agriculture, canola, oil, and potash. We need to be able to export and to move all of those things, whether by road or by rail, because we are not flying it out of there. As the agriculture industry produces greater crops, it needs a market to move them to.

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Madam Speaker, my honourable colleague used the term of fair, honest, and law-abiding people to describe working people in that constituency. That term describes working-class Canadians all over Canada. It also underscores the point that in the last 30 years, workers in Canada have contributed to an economic growth of over 50%.

Now we are seeing that these are the people who are struggling. We have higher debt loads per household. We have people who have retirement insecurity. We have people who are retiring with no dignity. We have workers who cannot afford child care. It seems that we have this section of our society that is turning all of the gears for a healthy economy being eroded.

We have talked about that before in a partisan way, so my question for the member is actually this. Who do you think the members of the middle class are who are being addressed in this budget?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I just want to remind the member to address questions to the Chair as opposed to individual members.

The member for Souris—Moose Mountain would like to respond.

• (1725)

Mr. Robert Kitchen: Madam Speaker, I often ask that same question. Who does the current government think the middle class is, and where is the government setting its priorities?

In Saskatchewan and in my riding, we have people in various walks of life, those who have nothing because the oil industry has taken them out of a well-paying job. They are trying to survive and to keep their families together in an area instead of moving away. We are seeing members of our middle class who are losing their jobs because this budget provides no indication of any jobs that will be created.

Before, our previous Conservative government reduced our taxes to the lowest they have been in 50 years. That allowed people to have more money in their pockets and to sustain the lifestyle that we would like to see for all Canadians.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak today to this budget bill. Bill C-15 is very important to Canadians, but unfortunately, time allocation was imposed by the Liberals.

My eyes have been tested and I am red-green colour-blind, but I have been in Parliament for over 10 years, and I think I have become red-blue colour-blind, because I see the same things happening over and over again. It is difficult for me to try to make sense of all this.

Hon. members are heckling again, as usual, but that is okay. I know they do not like to hear any criticisms or complaints, despite the sunny ways and despite the ability to have a moment in the House. That is fine, I will give them that, but the reality is that every

member will not have the opportunity to participate because of closure that was put on the debate.

When the Liberals were on this side, they would attack the government over and over about the use of closure. There were over 100 closure motions by the Conservatives. Lo and behold, the Liberals got the ring, put it on real quick, and sure enough, down came the hammer of closure of debate on a number of things, including this budget bill. We are talking about \$200 billion; no problem. The Liberals do not want to hear from members of their own backbench. In fact, most of them actually will not be speaking. It is too bad.

I am sure their constituents would like to know how important this budget is to their ridings, all the popular things, the things they believe in. Members could talk about it, but apparently, they are not allowed. Closure has been put on it. It is unfortunate. I do not know whether it is because they cannot test their mettle in this place. Maybe they are afraid that the public will understand what is taking place as we move away from the so-called new Parliament that we were supposed to have, to the same old system.

It is interesting that the Liberals defend their use of closure by using the bar of the previous government. I can say that bar is much lower than this one here. That bar is so low there is no way anyone could limbo under it at any point in time. That is no defence. Promises were made and parliamentarians, including some of the Liberal members, want to engage in conversation about issues, whether at committee or in the chamber.

The industry committee does a very good job of having that healthy debate. Witnesses have appeared at committee, people from different departments and ministers, and now there is a new study with regard to manufacturing challenges in our country. That has been done very much in a positive manner. People expressed different opinions, but it was done with respect. There is a set of rules in that committee. We do not see committees closing down debate right now, but unfortunately, that is what is happening here.

There was a time when budgets would pass, but that stopped and became much more evident during the Paul Martin administration. That was the beginning of the era of slipping different pieces of legislation into the overall budget. In the United States, they call them riders, the things that tag along to get a particular budget or other legislation passed. They will attach all kinds of things for their ridings or areas to get it done.

What we have here is critical to democracy and was spoken about many times right here in the last Parliament about how it undermined legislation, democratic reform, the ability for members to have a place to state their cases for their constituents. This is supposed to be a country united, not divided by these tactics. We have lost that.

Here is the problem that we faced with the previous administration regarding some of the processes that it followed. Guess where they are? A lot of those things are in the Supreme Court. A lot of the issues get through here. They do not go to committee for vetting. There are no suggestions, whether the government likes them or not, and then they decide whether to move on, but at least they have had a chance to think about it.

Government Orders

●(1730)

I remember the days when we would find many technical and other errors in bills that even if we did not agree 100% with the bill, the bill was carried at the end of the day, through democracy. It was not held up because we did not do our business.

That is what we have in this bill, between the banking information that is going on, retroactive legislation going back in time to change things, and other areas that are affected significantly.

We look at that, and we have some very serious issues that are taking place in this House. One of ours is veterans. I was particularly perturbed by the finance minister this morning alleging that we did not support veterans because we did not actually support the budget bill.

I rose in this House to challenge that assertion because every single member, whether we like something or not, stands up for our veterans and their perspective. They fought for that. They are people like Earl Scofield, who has passed away. He was one of my heroes and mentors. He was an aboriginal senator. He flew 17 missions in the tail turret. They called him “Boots” Scofield because one time when they were taking off, they hit the trees and crash-landed. He woke up, ran from the plane, and then realized he did not have his boots on anymore. That is what he was known as. Guess what? He believed in his democratic rights and he was at the NDP founding convention because he believed in different things.

Many other people from my community have gone to war, to Afghanistan most recently, but all the way back to the War of 1812. We have personally been touched by this ourselves.

I reject at all times the insinuation, especially from a senior Liberal cabinet minister, that we do not support our veterans whether we are NDP, Liberal, or Conservative, just because we disagree on an issue. That is not going to be the case on our watch here. Our veterans are offended when they are put in that perspective.

This budget bill is going to cause a lot of significant problems.

I want to touch on a couple of things that are dear to my local community. The first is, most importantly, what we see taking place with the Gordie Howe International Bridge. It was in Conservative budgets previously. They are now approximately six months behind in the request for proposals for the consortiums that would build the bridge. They are blaming incompetence, mismanagement, and all those things, but at the same time, they are now the decision-makers. I am really concerned what message is being sent to industry and others about Canadian manufacturing, agriculture, and other types of investments that are very important to the busiest border crossing in North America. Basically, in my riding, 35% of our daily trade with the United States takes place every single day along two kilometres of our border. Very often Parliament has been united in getting this new border facility done, but we have not seen advancement for the RFPs.

We fought a lot for innovation, especially for manufacturing and other types of work. AUTO21 is one of those things. It is a network for excellence. It is being sunsetted and is not going to get the funding, despite bringing in over \$1 billion of value-added revenue for innovation and financing from other institutions and also jobs for

Canadians. Basically, from 2001 to 2015, it has received funding of around \$81 million but received about \$70 million in actual net benefit derivatives directly attributed to it, plus \$1 billion for the secondary work that is done. What has it done? Two thousand four hundred student researchers are trained. There are some 685 industry and public sector partners, 500 researchers across Canada, 200 research and technology transfer projects. Some 48 academic institutions evolved. There have been 6,700 publications and reports, 320 patents, licences, and commercialization agreements, and \$141 million invested in auto research alone from this institution.

●(1735)

Unfortunately, AUTO21 is being run into the ground because of an ideology set up by a previous administration which said that after 14 years and despite all of the building, it is done.

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Spadina—Fort York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, having sat through that speech, I think what the member wants beyond reinvesting in the auto fund is to speed up the RFP for the bridge. What date would he like the RFP issued by?

Mr. Brian Masse: Today, Mr. Speaker, because it was due six months ago.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the elements that the Liberals have purported throughout this whole budget process, in fact since they took office, is a reduction in the middle-class tax rate. I would call it, and I think others on this side of the House would agree, a middle tax fraud. It is a shell game. What the Liberals give, the Liberals certainly take away.

I am wondering if the hon. member could comment on how he feels the Liberal middle tax fraud is working.

Mr. Brian Masse: It is fraudulent, Mr. Speaker. That is how it is working. The reality is that we have a situation to correct the balance and protect those individuals who need disposable income to maintain their homes or to make sure their kids get an education. For some people it is the ability to get prescription drugs and other types of necessary medicine in order to have a healthy lifestyle so they can be productive in Canadian society, whether it be working, volunteering, or helping in their communities.

It is difficult to accept these allotments that are taking place and not be compelled to speak out that they are going to the wrong people. We should be rebuilding the middle class while we can.

Government Orders

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my hon. colleague to comment on the budget bill being a showcase of election campaign fiction and a showcase of broken promises. Perhaps he could hone in on the issue of tax loopholes and small businesses, the gems of opportunities which the budget is epically failing.

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, a specific example of an election broken promise is that Liberals in my area promised that my single events sports betting bill, Bill C-221, would be put in the budget. It would become a regulated industry under my bill and would allow money to be shifted away from organized crime. It would provide jobs and new revenue sources for the government in terms of accountable funds. My bill is still out there. It could have been put in the budget. That was a promise made by the Liberals during the campaign.

Many of the economic studies that have been done related to this have shown that it would benefit small business. The redistribution of those funds from organized crime would affect tourism in a positive way, economic development through the management aspect with regard to single events sports betting, and also protect our billions of dollars' worth of infrastructure from the United States. That would take that industry allocation out of the equation. It would also provide desperately needed resources for public expenditures and investment opportunities. It would provide a revenue stream for those who have gaming problems.

We have all of that versus allowing \$10 billion going to organized crime and its associations per year, and another \$4 billion offshore that they do want to have a regulated environment that is not coming back at all and is not accountable. That is one specific example that would affect all of us in a positive way and it would reduce the revenue that organized crime depends upon every single day.

• (1740)

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member for Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères has about four minutes before we move to the vote.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, since I have just four minutes, I will try to be brief.

I want to start by saying that the Bloc Québécois will not support Bill C-15. This is probably not a surprise to the government, since we have already expressed our opposition to the bill for many reasons, which I will try to summarize.

Before I talk about the negatives, I do want to mention that the budget does have some positive points. For example, the money invested in infrastructure is positive, but we still do not know how the investments will be made. Will an agreement be signed with the Government of Quebec, and will it be signed fast enough for the Government of Quebec and businesses to benefit? We have some serious questions about this.

Another measure I want to highlight is the return of tax credits for labour-sponsored funds. This savings tool is very important and worthwhile for middle-class Quebecers.

There is also the universal child care benefit, which will be non-taxable from now on. The government is also combining all of the old benefits because they were so confusing. That is very positive. Unfortunately, however, they did not take the opportunity to eliminate the taxation of enhanced benefits imposed by the Conservatives. That could have been done.

I also want to mention the middle-class tax cut, which is not actually going to help the real middle class, just the upper middle class. Those are the people who are doing relatively well financially but who might run into a few financial troubles. They are not the richest segment of the population, so cutting their taxes is not a bad thing, but the government did not cut taxes for the right people.

There are some things that we strongly condemn, such as the fact that health transfers to the Government of Quebec and the provinces will be indexed at just 3% per year even though we all know that health care costs go up by 5% to 6% per year. That represents an \$800-million shortfall for the Government of Quebec, and once again, the federal government will benefit from that shortfall.

We could also talk about the changes, and the lack of changes, to the employment insurance fund. We have been fighting for over 20 years to get the government to stop dipping into the EI surplus. Yet again, however, it plans to take \$1.7 billion from the EI fund for the 2014-15 fiscal year.

Using money that belongs to workers to top up the government's coffers is unacceptable, especially given that not everyone pays into the program. After a certain income level, people no longer contribute. Money that belongs to the workers should serve the workers.

There is one piece of good news regarding employment insurance: new measures will increase the potential number of weeks of benefits to 20 in certain regions that have seen a huge increase in unemployment numbers. However, the problem lies in the regions that were chosen. According to our information, the regions chosen are in the Northwest Territories, Ontario, Manitoba, Alberta, British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Newfoundland, and Nunavut.

I am not sure if my colleagues noticed, but Quebec was not included in that list. This is because the unemployment rate was already quite high in Quebec and it did not go up as much as in some other areas. Quebecers are suffering just as much as everyone else, but they will not benefit from those improvements to EI.

• (1745)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): It being 5:45 p.m., pursuant to order made earlier today, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill now before the House.

[English]

The question is on the amendment. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Government Orders

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): All those in favour of the amendment will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Call in the members.

• (1820)

And the bells having rung:

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The question is on the amendment. May I dispense?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No

[*Chair read text of amendment to House*]

• (1830)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 51*)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif	Albas
Albrecht	Allison
Anderson	Arnold
Barlow	Berthold
Bezan	Block
Brassard	Brown
Calkins	Carrie
Chong	Clarke
Clement	Cooper
Deltell	Diotte
Doherty	Dreeshen
Eglinski	Falk
Fast	Gallant
Généreux	Genuis
Gladu	Godin
Gourde	Harder
Harper	Jeneroux
Kelly	Kenney
Kent	Kitchen
Kmiec	Lake
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Leitch
Liepert	Lobb
Lukiwski	MacKenzie
Maguire	McCaughey (Edmonton West)
McColeman	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)	Nater
Nicholson	Nuttall
Obhrai	O'Toole
Paul-Hus	Poilievre
Raith	Rayes
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Saroya
Scheer	Schmale
Shields	Shiple
Sopuck	Sorenson

Stanton
Stubbs
Tilson
Van Loan
Viersen
Warawa
Watts
Webber

Aldag
Alleslev
Angus
Arya
Aubin
Badawey
Bains
Baylis
Beech
Bibeau
Blaikie
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Bossio
Boulerice
Bratina
Brison
Caesar-Chavannes
Caron
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Chagger
Chen
Christopherson
Cullen
Dabrusin
Davies
Dhaliwal
Di Iorio
Donnelly
Dubé
Duclos
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Duvall
Easter
El-Khoury
Erskine-Smith
Fergus
Finnigan
Fonseca
Fortin
Fraser (West Nova)
Fry
Garneau
Gerretsen
Goldsmith-Jones
Gould
Grewal
Harcastle
Harvey
Holland
Hughes
Hutchings
Johns
Jordan
Julian
Khalid
Kwan
Lamoureux
Laverdière
Lebouthillier
Lemieux
Levitt
Lockhart
Longfield
MacGregor
Malcolmson
Marcil
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
Mathysen
May (Cambridge)
McCallum
McDonald

Strahl
Sweet
Trost
Vecchio
Wagantall
Warkentin
Waugh
Wong — 86

NAYS

Members

Alghabra
Anandasangaree
Arseneault
Ashton
Ayoub
Bagnell
Barsalou-Duval
Beaulieu
Benson
Bittle
Blair
Boissonnault
Boudrias
Boutin-Sweet
Breton
Brosseau
Cannings
Carr
Casey (Charlottetown)
Champagne
Choquette
Cormier
Cuzner
Damoff
DeCoursey
Dhillon
Dion
Drouin
Dubourg
Duguid
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Dzerowicz
Ehsassi
Ellis
Eyolfson
Fillmore
Fisher
Foote
Fragiskatos
Fraser (Central Nova)
Fuhr
Garrison
Gill
Goodale
Graham
Hajdu
Hardie
Hehr
Housefather
Hussen
Iacono
Jones
Jowhari
Kang
Khera
Lametti
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
LeBlanc
Lefebvre
Leslie
Lightbound
Long
MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney
Masse (Windsor West)
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
McCrirmon
McGuinty

Government Orders

McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
Mendès
Mihychuk
Soeurs)
Monsef
Morneau
Mulcair
Nantel
Nault
Oliphant
O'Regan
Paradis
Peschisolido
Philpott
Plamondon
Quach
Rankin
Rioux
Rodriguez
Rudd
Rusnak
Sahota
Sajjan
Sangha
Sarai
Schiefke
Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sikand
Sohi
Spengemann
Stetski
Tabbara
Tassi
Tootoo
Trudel
Vandenbeld
Virani
Whalen
Wilson-Raybould
Young

McKenna
McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendicino
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-
Moore
Morrissey
Murray
Nassif
O'Connell
Oliver
Ouellette
Pauzé
Petitpas Taylor
Picard
Poissant
Qualtrough
Ratansi
Robillard
Romanado
Ruimy
Saganash
Saini
Samson
Sansoucy
Scarpaleggia
Schulte
Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Simms
Sorbara
Ste-Marie
Stewart
Tan
Thériault
Trudeau
Vandal
Vaughan
Weir
Wilkinson
Wrzesnewskyj
Zahid— 224

PAIRED

Nil

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I declare the amendment lost.

The next question is on the main motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): In my opinion, the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

[*English*]

Hon. Andrew Leslie: Mr. Speaker, I think should you seek it you would find consent to apply the results of the previous vote to this one, with the Liberal members voting yea.

Mr. Gordon Brown: Mr. Speaker, Conservatives agree to apply the vote and will be voting no.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: Mr. Speaker, the NDP agrees to apply the vote and will be voting against the motion.

Mr. Luc Thériault: Mr. Speaker, we agree and are voting against the motion.

[*English*]

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, we agree to apply. The Green Party will be voting no.

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

(*Division No. 52*)

YEAS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Alleslev	Anandasangaree
Arseneault	Arya
Ayoub	Badawey
Bagnell	Bains
Baylis	Beech
Bibeau	Bittle
Blair	Boissonnault
Bossio	Bratina
Breton	Brison
Caesar-Chavannes	Carr
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)	Casey (Charlottetown)
Chagger	Champagne
Chen	Cormier
Cuzner	Dabrusin
Damoff	DeCoursey
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Di Iorio	Dion
Drouin	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Dzerowicz
Easter	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Ellis
Erskine-Smith	Eyolfson
Fergus	Fillmore
Finnigan	Fisher
Fonseca	Foote
Fragiskatos	Fraser (West Nova)
Fraser (Central Nova)	Fry
Fuhr	Garneau
Gerretsen	Goldsmith-Jones
Goodale	Gould
Graham	Grewal
Hajdu	Hardie
Harvey	Hehr
Holland	Housefather
Hussen	Hutchings
Iacono	Jones
Jordan	Jowhari
Kang	Khalid
Khera	Lametti
Lamoureux	Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Lefebvre	Lemieux
Leslie	Levitt
Lightbound	Lockhart
Long	Longfield
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney	Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
May (Cambridge)	McCallum
McCrimmon	McDonald
McGuinty	McKay
McKenna	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod (Northwest Territories)	Mendès
Mendicino	Mihychuk
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs)	
Monsef	

Private Members' Business

Morneau	Morrissey
Murray	Nassif
Nault	O'Connell
Oliphant	Oliver
O'Regan	Ouellette
Paradis	Peschisolido
Petitpas Taylor	Philpott
Picard	Poissant
Qualtrough	Ratansi
Rioux	Robillard
Rodriguez	Romanado
Rudd	Ruimy
Rusnak	Sahota
Saini	Sajjan
Samson	Sangha
Sarai	Scarpaleggia
Schiefke	Schulte
Serré	Sgro
Shanahan	Sheehan
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sikand	Simms
Sohi	Sorbara
Spengemann	Tabbara
Tan	Tassi
Tootoo	Trudeau
Vandal	Vandenbeld
Vaughan	Virani
Whalen	Wilkinson
Wilson-Raybould	Wrzesnewskyj
Young	Zahid — 172

NAYS

Members

Aboultaif	Albas
Albrecht	Allison
Anderson	Angus
Arnold	Ashton
Aubin	Barlow
Barsalou-Duval	Beaulieu
Benson	Berthold
Bezan	Blaikie
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	Block
Boudrias	Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet	Brassard
Brosseau	Brown
Calkins	Cannings
Caron	Carrie
Chong	Choquette
Christopherson	Clarke
Clement	Cooper
Cullen	Davies
Deltell	Diotte
Doherty	Donnelly
Dreeschen	Dubé
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)	Duvall
Egliniski	Falk
Fast	Fortin
Gallant	Garrison
Généreux	Genuis
Gill	Gladu
Godin	Gourde
Hardcastle	Harder
Harper	Hughes
Jeneroux	Johns
Julian	Kelly
Kenney	Kent
Kitchen	Kmieciak
Kwan	Lake
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Laverdière
Leitch	Liepert
Lobb	Lukiwski
MacGregor	MacKenzie
Maguire	Malcolmson
Marcil	Masse (Windsor West)
Mathysen	May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McColeman
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
Moore	Mulcair
Nantel	Nater
Nicholson	Nuttall
Obhrai	O'Toole
Paul-Hus	Pauzé

Plamondon	Poilievre
Quach	Raït
Rankin	Rayes
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Saganash
Sansoucy	Saroya
Scheer	Schmale
Shields	Shipley
Sopuck	Sorenson
Stanton	Ste-Marie
Stetski	Stewart
Strahl	Stubbs
Sweet	Thériault
Tilson	Trost
Trudel	Van Loan
Vecchio	Viersen
Wagantall	Warawa
Warkentin	Watts
Waugh	Webber
Weir	Wong — 138

PAIRED

Nil

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Finance.

(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): It being 6:35 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business, as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

● (1835)

[English]

CANDIDATE GENDER EQUITY ACT

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby South, NDP) moved that Bill C-237, An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act (gender equity), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am proud to stand today to speak to my private member's bill, Bill C-237, the candidate gender equity act. In this speech I will outline why I think the bill is necessary, how the bill proposes to address identified problems, responses to possible criticisms, who supports the bill, and how I hope the bill will move forward.

At the outset, I would like to say that at the very least I hope we can send the bill to committee as it is an important first step to making our Parliament more gender equal. As I have explained to colleagues, I am open to making changes to improve the bill, with the overall objective of having it made law, and increasing the percentage of women elected to Parliament in the next and subsequent elections.

Despite the very partisan nature of this place, I think we can all say that we felt pride when the Prime Minister announced that his first cabinet would be the first-ever gender-balanced cabinet. It sent a signal to Canadians and to the world that we take gender equity seriously.

Private Members' Business

I am also happy to hear that the Prime Minister also considers himself a feminist, as do I. In my humble opinion, if we continue down this path, I think it is possible that this Parliament may be considered the gender-equity Parliament by future historians. However, there is a way to go before we would deserve such a label, and a lot has to do with who sits in this place.

Despite electing a record number 88 women MPs in the 2015 election, women currently hold only 26% of the seats in this place, meaning that almost three out of every four MPs is male. As a result, Canada ranks 61st out of 191 countries when it comes to the proportion of women elected to Parliament. That is not a proud record. It positions us behind countries such as Iraq, Afghanistan, and El Salvador, according to the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

What is worse is that we are dropping like a stone in those international league tables. In 1991, we were ranked 21st in the world in terms of the proportion of seats held by women, but have since been passed by 40 countries who now elect more women to the legislature than we do. Although Canadian women were granted the right to vote almost 100 years ago, it might take us until 2075, which is another 60 years, for women to hold half the seats in our Parliament if we continue at this current rate. Throughout history, only 6% of the seats in the House of Commons have ever been held by women. This needs to change. This is more than mere statistics. These numbers mean something.

If our system was fair, the House of Commons would mirror our society. If the system by which we select and elect MPs was just, the House of Commons would not be forever filled mostly with people that look like you and me, Mr. Speaker, but would better reflect the rich diversity of our country, and half of the seats in this place would be held by women. It is wrong that a certain group, such as straight, old, white males, should dominate our legislature. It is wrong from a justice perspective and from a policy perspective.

The politics of presence matters, and the decisions made in this place directly reflect the perspectives of those who propose and vote on these decisions. With so few women in this place to have their ideas and voices heard, the decisions made here will not accurately reflect the views of Canadian women. This is wrong.

There are two steps to becoming an MP in any modern democracy. The first step requires aspiring candidates to be selected as an official candidate by a political party. The second step requires the official candidate to win enough votes to secure a seat during an election. More and more academic research shows voters are not biased against women candidates. When women run, they are just as likely to be elected as men.

The reason so few women are elected to Parliament is that parties nominate so few women to stand as candidates. More than enough women put their names forward to stand as candidates. Therefore, there is not a lack of supply of women to run in half of the 338 ridings in Canada. This makes sense. After all, we have 18 million women in Canada. Parties need only 169 women candidates to present a balanced slate. I do not think anyone can argue that parties would be unable to find 169 qualified, deserving women candidates.

The reason so few women are selected as candidates is bias within the nomination processes used by political parties. In many cases,

party officials and selectors are biased toward selecting men over women, because they think men candidates have a better chance of winning elections. It has nothing to do with merit. The merit argument has been thoroughly discredited in the academic literature. Not only do more than enough women come forward to run for office, they are usually more credentialed than their male competitors. The idea of merit is now seen as a mere cover to disguise patriarchal values, that is, systematic preference for men over women.

• (1840)

However, we do know that men do not have a better chance of winning elections than women, but this perception of winnability stacks the process against women. My own published research, written in partnership with my wife, Dr. Jeanette Ashe, who was chair of the Department of Political Science at Douglas College, shows that in some Canadian candidate nominations, men are five times more likely to win candidate selection contests than women when all other factors are held equal.

While Canada currently has no legislation on the books to promote gender equity in our democratic process, legislatures in over 100 countries have discovered similar biases and have passed laws to ensure more women are elected to office. We need to do the same here by enacting Bill C-237, the candidate gender equity act.

Where other countries have passed intrusive laws or constitutional amendments which, for example, forbid political parties from participating in elections if they fail to put forward a certain proportion of women candidates, Bill C-237 proposes a mild incentive scheme to nudge political parties in moving toward gender parity in their nominations.

The bill incentivizes political parties to run more women candidates by linking it to existing public subsidies for parties.

Many may not be aware that after every election, political parties are partially reimbursed for their election expenses. Taxpayers reimburse political parties for up to 80% of funds spent on research, advertising and other election activities. Bill C-237 proposes that in order to incentivize parties, some of this money should be withheld if a party fails to put forward a gender-balanced candidate list.

The incentive formula is simple and based on subtracting the percentage of women candidates from the percentage of men candidates to give us the extent to which a party's list of candidates is gender balanced. Here is an example. Under this new law, if party A puts forward 45% women candidates and 55% men candidates, the party loses none of its public subsidies. However, if party B puts forward 25% women candidates and 75% men candidates, then the public subsidy is reduced by 10%.

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As these numbers show, this reduction nudges parties toward running more women candidates and toward parity. The good news is that we know these measures work. Similar incentivizing laws have been put in place in France, Ireland and Portugal with great effect. It is important to point out that France has a single member system, Ireland has a single transferrable vote system, Portugal has a list proportional representative system, proving this law can work under any type of electoral system.

In terms of how well it works, in the last Irish election, a similar law saw a 90% increase in the number of women candidates and a 40% increase in the number of women elected to the Irish parliament. This works.

It is important that I did my homework before proposing the bill. It is based on my own academic work as well as that of others, and I was assisted by a panel of experts when I did the draft.

I first began writing about political gender equity while doing my Ph.D. at the London School of Economics and continued to publish on this topic in my position as associate professor at Simon Fraser University's School of Public Policy.

I have also been helped by a panel of experts, including professors Rosie Campbell from Birkbeck College; Sarah Childs and Liz Evans from Bristol University; Fiona Buckley from University College Cork; and, Meryl Kenny from the University of Edinburgh. I thank these experts for their assistance in drafting this bill and helping me ensure it in no way interferes with internal workings of parties. That is really important to know that this law in no way interferes with how political parties nominate their candidates.

Under this new law, parties still entirely choose their own nomination rules and processes, and decide for themselves how they will meet these incentive measures.

However, although I have done significant research in consultation, I am not presumptive enough to assume it is a perfect law. That is why I ask my colleagues to support it in getting it through committee so we can work together to make it even better.

I have managed to secure considerable endorsements and support for my bill from organizations and individuals. Supportive organizations include Samara, Leadnow, YWCA Toronto, FairVote Canada, ACTRA, Groupes Femmes Politique et Démocratie, the Canadian Council of Muslim Women. I would also like to thank Jerry Dias from Unifor for expressing his support for the bill.

●(1845)

Donna Dasko, co-chair for the Campaign for an Equal Senate and past national chair of Equal Voice also supports this bill. Ms. Dasko states, "The Prime Minister had appointed women to half his cabinet positions. Now we need to achieve gender equality and greater diversity in the House of Commons and Senate of Canada. This bill will help us move forward toward this goal".

I have also heard considerable support for the bill from Canadian academics, including Jeanette Ashe, Sylvia Bashevkin, Karen Bird, Amanda Bittner, Marjorie Griffin Cohen, Avigail Eisenberg, Lynda Erickson, Penny Gurstein, Fiona MacDonald, Sharon McGowan, Susan Prentice, and Melanee Thomas.

In support of this bill, Marjorie Griffin Cohen, professor at Simon Fraser University states, "Bill C-237 is an important initiative to spur political parties to act on behalf of greater gender parity in the House of Commons. Canada has a poor record on gender representation, something that only has improved in other countries when measures to ensure equality were put into practice".

I would like to repeat that we are 61st out of 191 countries in terms of women's representation in our House.

Finally, I would like to thank my parliamentary colleagues for their support, especially my Liberal, Green, and NDP colleagues who have jointly seconded this bill, as well as Conservative Senator Nancy Ruth and Liberal Senator Mobina Jaffer for their public endorsements. It is a truly cross-partisan effort.

Next, I would like to consider and respond to a few potential criticisms of the bill. First, some colleagues have asked whether or not this bill is charter compliant. I want to assure all members that I secured a legal opinion from the Office of the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel and that Bill C-237 meets the requirements of our Constitution.

According to the Law Clerk's office, "Bill C-237, if found to infringe subsection 15(1), which in our opinion it does not, could be considered an affirmative action measure and thus saved by subsection 15(2), since it strives to promote consideration of a disadvantaged group—women—in politics and public life. In this sense, the legislation could be seen to have an ameliorative purpose and fall within the ambit of subsection 15(2). It is our opinion that Bill C-237 does not infringe the indicated sections of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms".

One specific argument I have heard recently is that the bill would put smaller parties at a comparative disadvantage. More specifically, if a party ran just one candidate in one riding, the difference between male and female candidates would be 100%.

While this example may sound convincing, section 444(1)(c) of the Canada Elections Act currently requires registered parties to receive at least "2% of the number of valid votes cast at the election" in order to be eligible for a reimbursement. It would be impossible for a one-candidate party to receive 2% of the votes nationally.

A second criticism concerns whether Bill C-237 is inclusive of transgendered candidates and those who do not subscribe to dominant male-female gender binary categorizations.

First, currently candidates running for nominations are legally required to state their occupation but not their gender. Bill C-237 aims to rectify this historical oversight by requiring Elections Canada to include gender on its nomination forms, allowing the possibility for transgender or non-binary candidates to have the option to self-identify when they decide to run for office.

Equally as important, the bill would ensure that parties have an incentive to recruit candidates from these groups, using the 45% male, 45% female, 10% unspecified formula.

In conclusion, I hope this short speech goes some way to persuading members that this bill is worthwhile supporting. To recap, the candidate gender equity act, one, works in other countries like Ireland, France, and Portugal; two, is charter compliant; three, does not interfere with the internal party democracy; four, works under any type of electoral system; five, provides incentives for parties to select more transgendered and non-binary candidates; and six, was designed by experts.

Again, although I have done what I can to ensure I put forward the best possible bill, I am not so arrogant to assume it still could not be improved. I ask the Prime Minister, his gender-balanced cabinet, and my colleagues to support it getting to committee so we can work together to make it better together.

• (1850)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it goes without saying that this particular government is committed to the ideals of gender-balanced representation, not just within cabinet but within the House.

We are striving to do that. There are lots of opportunities, especially as we move toward the democratic reform that the government is committed to undertaking.

The question I have for the member on his bill is this. If we look around this place, we see we are under-represented not just by gender but by different minority groups. I am curious why the member limited his bill just to try to reflect a better gender balance. Why not extend that to include the different ethnic communities we have and the fact that this room most likely does not represent the vast diversity, at least in a relative scale, throughout the country?

Why limit the bill to just looking at gender and not at other minority groups?

Mr. Kennedy Stewart: Mr. Speaker, I welcome the government's future efforts to bring more equity to the House of Commons for all groups in society. We only have 26% women after working for decades and decades, and the same can be said for different groups in the House.

Since this is a private member's bill and not a government bill, I am limited in the scope that I can present in this bill. I thought that gender equity was the most important issue to tackle at this time. I welcome the government's future efforts to extend equity measures in the House and would be happy to vote for them.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer—Mountain View, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has been interesting to listen to the commentary. As we know, as far as leadership is concerned here, there are two female leaders of political parties and two male leaders of political parties. It was not that long ago, though, if we think about it, that about 90% of all Canadians had female premiers. If we look at that, we would find that the best people do find their way to the top. Encouraging women to make sure they compete for nominations is certainly the best way, but I think we have found in many ways that the best people, when they are women, are the ones who are going to be in Parliament.

I wonder if perhaps the member could comment on that particular situation in the provinces.

Mr. Kennedy Stewart: Mr. Speaker, what we are doing is not working here. All parties failed to promote gender-balanced

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candidate lists. Only 26% of the folks in this place are women, and that is the highest level we have ever had.

We are ranked 61st in the world when it comes to gender equity. Places like Afghanistan, Iraq, and Kazakhstan have all passed us on the list because they have undertaken similar measures.

The bill that I have put forward is a small nudge for political parties. It is not at all controlling for internal party processes. I would urge my colleague and everyone in the House to look at this and show that the face we are showing the world needs to change in the House.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, certainly the majority of parties in Parliament ran on an electoral reform platform. I would like to hear more from the member about how his initiative might interface with a change in the way we elect members of Parliament.

Mr. Kennedy Stewart: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question and all of her hard work on this exact issue.

When I heard the Prime Minister say that this would be the last election with first past the post, of course, I took this into consideration and made sure I designed this bill so it would work with any type of electoral system. I mentioned in my speech that it is used in countries like Portugal, France, and Ireland, which use a variety of different systems, such as STV, proportional representation, and even single member. It would even work with an AV system, as proposed by the Liberals.

This exactly matches our plan for electoral reform in the House, and in fact, it would be a great first step to say our new electoral system is designed so that we have a House of Commons that is gender balanced.

• (1855)

Mr. Mark Holland (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a great pleasure to rise today to speak to an issue that is incredibly important. I really want to thank the member for Burnaby South for his work with his private member's bill and generally for raising the issue of gender parity, which is so important.

When we think how far we have come since Agnes Macphail was first elected to this place and the progress we made, when we think this is the first gender-balanced cabinet in Canada's history, and when we see the largest number of women ever elected to the House of Commons, that is indeed phenomenal progress. However, the member is absolutely right that it is not enough.

I often get the opportunity, as most members do, to go into schools and talk with students. I ask them to reflect on the name of the place in which we serve, the House of Commons. It is the house of the common people. It is so important that this place reflect and look like the people we represent.

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Historically, we have done a poor job, as the member for Kingston and the Islands mentioned, not just in representation of women in this place, but also other demographics and so, thinking about the processes we can engage in to ensure that this is a place that is truly reflective of the Canadian population is essential.

There are a number of processes we are engaged in right now to do precisely that: look at some of the underlying reasons why it is, as an example, women are not participating to the degree that we would like them to participate. What are the impediments? What are the things we can change to make this place more friendly to the Canadian populace as a whole?

We are also certainly engaging in a process that I am very excited to be part of to change our electoral system in looking at the way we vote and how that process engages and enfranchises Canadians. I think that process will no doubt inform this question of gender parity and equality.

Notwithstanding all of that and notwithstanding a deep appreciation for the efforts of the member for Burnaby South, I have a number of concerns with the bill.

I will start with the issue of small parties. In the last election, there were six parties which only ran one candidate. By definition, each of those parties would be in a state of gender imbalance because they only had one person that ran for them. We may say to just have another person run, but the reality for a political party that is small is that it can be a monumental feat to get somebody else to run.

We know in the decision that was passed in Figueroa the importance that courts, and I think Canadians generally, place on the participation of smaller parties. They have a very important role in our democratic process. While I appreciate the member might be willing to do that at committee, it is certainly one big problem that I have today which I think is important to point out.

I also want to think about freedom of expression, generally.

Let us conceive for a moment a situation where a party decided that it wanted all female candidates, as an example. That party would actually be penalized under this mechanism by not being able to run all female candidates.

In general, parties should have the ability to organize their affairs as they see fit. There are many parties, including in this House, which have positions that I disagree with or that conduct a nomination process in a way that I would not concur with, but that is their democratic prerogative. We have to ask what the implications of the bill and these penalties would put on that process.

We also have to think about, as was raised earlier in the debate, the potentiality of where this might lead. If we put in penalties for parties that do not meet certain quotas or certain targets, would we do that across the spectrum to ensure there is equality in representation of all of the different faces that populate Canada? If we do that, what is the implication?

There is an issue of constitutionality, I think, that very much remains. We could imagine a scenario where a local riding association is having a nomination meeting and where there is enormous pressure to hit a target and the question on the minds of the people voting in that nomination meeting could be torn between,

on the one hand, voting for the person most qualified and, on the other hand, having to meet a quota so that their party is not punished. Could there be a situation where maybe the best person is not chosen as a result? That certainly is a serious concern.

• (1900)

As an extension of that and nominations generally, we want to ensure that the process is set up so all people are encouraged to run, that we not only look at the barriers that stop them from running, but also that we do not build into the system ways that shut down our nomination process or shut out certain individuals because of the structures we put in place.

On that basis, notwithstanding this bill succeeding or not succeeding, we have a lot of work to do. We need to look at the barriers stopping women or other individuals who want to come forward, who are under-represented in this Parliament, and work to fix those barriers. They need to work with us in the upcoming process to reform our democratic institutions and our voting. At the end of it, we want to ensure we have a House of Commons that is truly reflective of its name.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to stand here today to debate Bill C-237, an act to amend the Canada Elections Act (gender equity).

In Elgin—Middlesex—London we have it right. Although I am the first woman to be elected federally in the riding, I am definitely not the first candidate to run for this position. My cousin Luella Watson was the PC candidate in 1997 and the trend for female candidates continues at all levels of government.

To start let me share with the House my run for the candidacy to represent the Conservative Party in the 2015 general election. In December 2014, I was part of a highly contested nomination that included four women and two men. Ms. Catharine Sloan, Ms. Suzanna Dieleman, and Mrs. Kathy Cook were the three other women who put their names forward along with two male candidates, Mr. Dean Kitts and Mr. Bill Denning. This was democracy at its best. All of the women and men who ran in this race were either successful business people or executive level staff for the municipalities or the banking industry. The membership had a choice.

Then moving on to the federal election, I was part of a five-person race that included Liberal candidate Lori Baldwin-Sands and Green Party bro as she called herself, Bronagh Morgan, as well as male candidates Fred Sinclair for the NDP and Michael Hopkins for the Christian reform party. In this situation 60% of the candidates in the federal election were female.

In the surrounding ridings both London North Centre and London—Fanshawe had female candidates representing the Conservative Party and following the general election, three out of the four members of Parliament are female, albeit from three different parties.

My point truly is that this is about democracy. When taking this discussion back to the members of my board, I received great feedback from many individuals. I feel that the bill is not only undemocratic but actually belittles my own victory of becoming the candidate for my party and then the member of Parliament. I do not see myself as a second-class candidate but the bill would potentially make me feel this way and this should not be just about gender. Does my merit and hard work not count?

A survey completed in 2014 over a six-year span by Abacus Data observed the following. Among the 1,850 Canadian respondents in the online poll, 28% of men said they were more inclined to run for office as compared with 15% of women. As one of my board members said, it is upon us to provide opportunity rather than to mandate opportunity. Another member of my board, stated that they want the most qualified person in office, not some token woman there to fill a quota. Another stated that it isn't a quota; it is the best person for the position.

Now here is a breakdown of my own EDA. The president is male. The vice-president is female. The fundraising chair is female. The secretary is female and the CFO is male. The board has a very equal number of men and women and that allows us to have incredible discussions. Let me be straight, with women like Betty Crockett, a true pioneer of the banking industry as one of the first female bank managers, on my board women are listened to. Their experience and expertise is heard. Their ideas are part of a constant discussion.

Now when I look at the provincial level in my riding similar things occurred when comparing them with my federal nomination. Two of the five candidates were women: the mayor of the Municipality of Bayham, Lynn Acre, and the deputy mayor of Thames Centre, Delia Reiche. Both candidates were excellent options but conceded to our current MPP Jeff Yurek, an exceptional legislator at Queen's Park. Would I want to replace Mr. Yurek because he was male? Absolutely not.

I will tell the House on an aside that he is going to be laughing right now because every day I tell him, let us get rid of him. He is an excellent member of the legislature representing the people of Elgin—Middlesex—London, and as the health critic for Ontario. He is an incredibly reliable representative and an excellent counterpart to my role as the federal member. This is about democracy.

It gives people the right to run for nomination, the right to run as a candidate in the federal election, and the right to serve as a member of Parliament if elected. Here in the House, I am proud to stand with our interim leader, the member for Sturgeon River—Parkland. She was elected from a slate where one-half of the candidates were female. Members of our caucus elected her because they believed she would be the best leader.

As we start moving toward a leadership race many names are circulating, including many excellent female candidates. At the end of this, regardless of the gender of the leader, we need the best leader to lead our party. This is not about men versus women. It is about leadership for our communities, our ridings, and our country.

• (1905)

Let us look at some of the women who currently sit in the House of Commons representing their ridings. I believe that the member for

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London—Fanshawe was not elected because she was a woman, but because the people in her riding believe in her. The same goes for my colleagues in London West, Samia—Lambton, Haldimand—Norfolk, Simcoe—Grey, Milton, Essex, Repentigny, Saanich—Gulf Islands, and South Surrey—White Rock. These are representatives from all parties, currently sitting and elected to the House.

I believe that if we asked each and every one of them, they would say that they were elected, not because of their gender, but because they were the best for the job and their constituents believed in them. We are talking about people making some people eligible for a job; therefore, making some people ineligible for a job.

As with my own nomination race, and I believe that of many others, it was about growing support in one's riding, selling memberships to make people eligible to vote, and getting the vote out. Why should this be any different for men than it is for women? Why should we make men ineligible to run in order to meet our quota?

All of this being said, I do know that statistics indicate that we need a minimum of 30% sitting at a board table to make a real difference. In a country where our population is 52% women and 48% men, would the simple math not put women in the majority for making the decisions of Canadians when voting? This is truly just a general idea, but that would go for party politics and federal elections.

Going back to my own nomination for the party, I believe that the two male candidates had female campaign managers, and the three female candidates had female campaign managers as well. Now there was a total imbalance if we are looking at it to be gender-based. Even the nomination committee had a majority of females on the board, three out four members, and not once because of their gender, but because of the talent and expertise and what they had to offer to the nomination process.

I fully believe in gender equality, but this is undemocratic. We need the best people for the job, female or male.

As everyone knows in the House, this job is the furthest thing from normal. Some days we start breakfast with stakeholders, followed by committee meetings, and one-on-one meetings in our office. We do question period and debates, and continue with our day, many times late into the evening. Last week, for instance, we were here until 12 a.m. on two nights. On weekends, we attend community events, meet with constituents, and hopefully get to sleep in our own beds.

Private Members' Business

For me personally, I know that I would not be able to do this job if it were not for an extremely supportive family. My job has changed my own family's life. The other day, my husband Mike's boss asked him how he was managing with his new life. While I am here serving my constituents and country, my husband is home, working full time, grocery shopping, organizing and helping with the children's needs, keeping in contact with both my parents and his own, and attending events in my absence.

Every day that I am here, I miss my children, but with current technology, I get to speak with them and watch what they are doing at the time. It is not an easy decision to go into politics. All of us make sacrifices, and that is probably why the results from the poll only had 28% of men and 15% of women who would enter politics.

At the end of the day, our job is to encourage people to run for public office, not to mandate it.

• (1910)

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured in this moment to thank the people of Nanaimo—Ladysmith for supporting me, working hard for my election, and electing me. I have many allies throughout the riding, and it does make all the difference around who prevails. For us, with the nomination and election, it was almost a two-year campaign. I am thankful.

I am going to talk first about the imperative for the bill. In 97 ridings across the country in last fall's election, voters had no opportunity to cast their ballot for a woman from a major party. That is a significant gap. Even if people wanted to vote for women who had a chance of forming government, they did not have that opportunity.

Election after election, the uneven addition of women to ballots throughout our country means we are not electing enough women to Parliament. That is why we are getting these tiny incremental gains. This is supposed to be the parity Parliament. We have 26% of women elected, with 52% of the population being female, and we have only made a 1% improvement from 2011. Canada, embarrassingly, ranks 61st in the world. We have to get to almost page 3 of the international list before we can find our country's name. I want us to change that.

At this rate, Equal Voice, which is a terrific advocacy, non-governmental organization, calculates that it will be 89 years until we reach gender parity in Parliament. That is a change that is painfully slow.

That is why I think this is a problem. When Parliament does not reflect us, then sometimes it is possible for voters to disconnect from the parliamentary process. It might be that a parliament that does not reflect the country perhaps has priorities that are a little different from what people sitting around the kitchen table would like to see. That is perhaps why we do not have universal child care in our country. That is perhaps why we do not have affordable universal pharmacare. That is perhaps why we do not have a good palliative care program.

We know that women disproportionately end up looking after their families, both at the beginning and the end of life. If we could

get them here in these seats, they might help us to adopt the policies that would take the pressure off everyone.

This is perhaps why first nations kids are so embarrassingly discriminated against at budget time. Even now, we have had the human rights tribunal say that Parliament over decades has had the wrong priorities.

In turn, these lack of policy supports may well be keeping women out of both community life and off the ballot, so there is an interesting circularity of this argument. When women are squeezed by family obligations, they decide not to run, and then they do not get into these seats and they do not vote for front-line family support issues.

Parliament was conceived well before women had the right to vote, and it has been fairly static for over 100 years. Parliament has just not innovated, and the bill is an innovation. Therefore, I appreciate the people who are here for the discussion and are willing to bite into this to see how it could work.

Much has changed in the hundred years. We got the federal right to vote in 1918, the right to run for office in 1921, the Persons Case in 1929, admission of women into the army in 1980, and inclusion of women's equality in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1982. Also, just a few years ago, we got changing tables added in the parliamentary bathrooms. We innovate where we can. All of these changes reflect the evolution of our society.

There is a lot of attention being paid to the gender-based cabinet, and I applaud the Prime Minister for appointing men and women equally to his cabinet. It is not the first time that this has happened, though. In 2008, Quebec made that commitment. In 2015, Premier Notley, in Alberta, made the same commitment. That did not get more women on the ballot. It was a good move, but we want to at least have a chance to elect women. We want equal opportunity.

Canada still has no laws in place to promote gender equity in our democratic process. How can we make it change? I have a list of programs, such as Equal Voices' Daughters of the Vote, which is a fantastic way to get young people thinking early about what it would look like for them to be sitting in these seats. I applaud that work.

• (1915)

Second, we can support women in nomination and election processes, and I am very grateful for the people who got all of us here to the House.

Third, proportional representation would help. In countries around the world and in almost every western democracy people are elected using proportional representation. They all elect more women than we do.

Fourth, when I was at the United Nations this spring, I heard a fantastic presentation from Italy, a country that was so proud that because it had legislated gender equity on candidate slates, it went from 21% women in just one election to 31% women. That is 21% to 31% just by virtue of getting a balance on who was on the ballot.

Private Members' Business

My colleague's bill is not that kind of legislation, but it does tell us what our options are.

Turning to my colleague's bill, Bill C-237 would give parties incentives to nominate more women. It would not take away freedom. It would not tell anybody how to do it or even whether to do it. However, if they do choose to nominate an equal slate, then they would have a financial incentive to do that. The fine print is 45% female, 45% male. Members will notice that the math adds up so there is a 10% fluidity there, whether that is transgendered or gender-fluid, people who just do not identify, that gives them flexibility.

Again, this would be an incentive for people to put gender equity measures in place. They would determine how and whether to do it. This would also work in any voting system: first past the post, proportional representation, anything.

The idea of linking public subsidies to gender equity measures is not new. Canada had a royal commission in 1991 that recommended just this thing. This has since been implemented in quite a few western countries.

If we do get to this point that we are electing more women to Parliament, what might the impact be? We could enact policies that would appoint equal numbers of women to our crown corporations and agencies. We could establish a national action plan to end violence against women, something that embarrassingly the country has not done yet. Even Australia and places that we do not think of in this way have already made this connection. We can support more work on domestic violence. We can take action to close the pay gap between men and women. We can ensure safe and equal access to reproductive rights and reproductive health care. As well, we can address those policies that might be keeping women off the ballot or out of participating in public life: day care, home care, palliative care, early childhood education support.

The United Nations Security Council did a study a few years ago on peace, security, and women. Part of the conclusion was that when women's groups were able to influence negotiations or push for a peace deal, an agreement was almost always reached. Agreements reached with the participation of women were 35% more likely to last for 15 years or longer. We want to have women involved internationally around the table, and advocating for peace and security as well.

I was so honoured to be part of the Canadian delegation at the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women. I am grateful to the Minister of Status of Women for including me in the delegation. We heard from every woman leader all over the world that we had an unprecedented opportunity in the world right now to bring gender equality. It is not just about Canada. As well, we heard again and again that women's rights and social justice were key to global sustainable solutions. If we empower women, if we end violence against women, and if we bring and educate young girls into the system, we would solve some of the difficult problems this planet faces, whether environment, food security, or anything. We need all hands on deck, full participation, all intellect, and all diversity and opinions to solve the problems that face us.

As Equal Voice says, women got the right to vote 100 years ago. It should not take another century for women to have an equal voice.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the hon. member for Burnaby South on bringing forward Bill C-237, the candidate gender equity act, and initiating a very important conversation about how to achieve gender parity in politics in Canada.

Having spent much of my professional career working with women around the world, I have studied best practices in how to increase women's representation in parliaments. Legislative solutions, such as those outlined in Bill C-237, including financial incentives or penalties to encourage political parties to nominate more women, are considered by UN Women, UNDP, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, and other major international organizations to be commonly recognized methods to achieve greater gender parity. In fact, I facilitated an international round table in Oslo on financing rules for women in politics in 2009, and this was one of the key recommendations.

Many countries around the world are going much further than this bill in their legislative frameworks. Today, Canada ranks 61st in the world when it comes to women in Parliament. We rank behind countries like Sudan, Iraq, and Cuba.

In virtually every case where countries have achieved gender parity in Parliament, it has been done using mandatory legislated measures, regardless of the electoral system. In Canada, at the current rate, even with party leaders who have a strong commitment to electing more women, we will not achieve parity for another 90 years, unless we make some changes which, in my view, cannot be left solely to the goodwill of political parties.

● (1920)

[*Translation*]

I am proud to speak in Parliament with men and women who are fighting for gender parity and equality. More women are serving in this Parliament than ever before. We have an unprecedented cabinet that reflects and represents all Canadians. The political parties took new measures to encourage more female candidates to run, and many of those who were elected worked tirelessly to establish new support networks and systems.

Private Members' Business

However, as a nation, we are not leading the way and we cannot trust that we will improve things voluntarily or that we will always have the right leadership.

[*English*]

Women have never held more than 26% of the seats in the House. We have not seen a dramatic increase in representation since 1993. It is true that we have seen progress, but we cannot just assume that progress will be inevitable. If we choose to settle for the incremental, then we risk losing everything we have accomplished.

Globally, in the period following the 1995 Beijing Declaration, there were significant increases in women's representation, largely as a result of the introduction of quotas and other temporary special measures in many countries. However, since 2010, many countries have reached a plateau between 25% and 30%, and in some regions they have even regressed. Canada is falling further and further behind as countries outside of Europe and North America begin to advance beyond the 30% mark.

Confronting inequality demands the deployment of unequal measures. As a demographic, women in Canada continue to become highly educated and still continue to make only 73¢ for every \$1 that men make. Women in Canada have less access to money networks from which to fundraise for political campaigns, but studies have found that elected women in Canada outspend their male opponents by about 10%. This means that women in Canada need to work harder and spend more money than men to achieve the same results.

Financial incentives to political parties for nominating more women would only be rectifying an existing imbalance. This is the reason that in 2003, under the Chrétien government, the Liberal women's caucus was so active in ensuring that nomination contests were included in the spending limits and disclosure requirements in the 2003 electoral financing legislation.

[*Translation*]

I am proud of our government's historic and ongoing commitment in this area. It introduced legislation that had a real impact on women during the election. The importance of the 2003 election financing act cannot be overstated.

During the last election, 29.7% of candidates were women. These same women won 26% of the seats in Parliament. Studies conducted by Equal Voice showed that, when a woman's name appears on the ballot, she is elected almost 50% of the time. Canadians are not what is holding women back. The problem is getting women's names on the ballot in the first place. Elections are not where women face the greatest inequality.

Women have a disproportionately small number of opportunities and unique financial constraints. They lack access to informal political networks. Despite all proof to the contrary, they have to overcome the preconceived idea that they will not be elected. They tend not to volunteer and tend to be discouraged by what is still a very male-dominant political culture .

● (1925)

[*English*]

It is true that Bill C-237 does not propose a solution to all of these problems. It is not all-encompassing. In fact, it is by necessity

minimalist in its scope. However, it does initiate an important conversation, and it would be a true disservice for us to allow that conversation to end without being studied at committee.

As I travelled the globe, talking to women on five continents, managing a network with staff spread over eight countries, the barriers faced by women were the same, differing only in degree. Women, even in Canada, still carry a larger responsibility for caregiving than their male counterparts. That is why the procedure and House affairs committee is studying how to make Parliament more family friendly.

We have heard from several witnesses who have indicated that measures such as a more efficient work schedule, better child care facilities, and reducing heckling would lead to more women on the ballot. Women still face stereotypes and biases in the media that men do not face, and female leadership characteristics are not given the same weight as male leadership styles. Part of this is because of the lack of strong female role models in powerful positions, something that is finally starting to change now that the Prime Minister has appointed a gender-equal cabinet.

Recruitment and training are essential for women in politics, and several parties have implemented measures to ensure that women are being recruited, including mandating that women be included in the candidate search committee, or refusing to allow a local association to hold a candidate selection meeting unless there are women on the ballot. Many parties also have specific funds to raise money for women candidates.

[*Translation*]

The electoral system itself also presents a major obstacle to more women getting elected. The 10 lowest ranked countries in the world in terms of the number of women elected to public office are all countries that use a first-past-the-post system. That should be a major point to consider if and when consultations are held on changing Canada's electoral system.

[*English*]

Despite all the other reforms that can improve women's representation, the evidence continues to show that, regardless of the type of electoral system, there are limits to the effectiveness of voluntary measures by political parties. The most common argument against mandatory legislative solutions is autonomy of political parties. However, the overwhelming evidence goes against this.

Sweden is the only country I am aware of that has achieved parity by relying only on voluntary measures. In that case, the parties have willingly adopted a zipper system, where every second candidate must be a woman, something that is not possible under our current electoral system.

Adjournment Proceedings

[*Translation*]

This bill is not about putting Canada ahead of everyone else. It is about helping Canada to catch up. Financial incentives are one of the least intrusive measures that can be used to achieve political equality. Under this approach, the political parties will still be free to select candidates and make appointments.

[*English*]

Equal representation is more than a matter of justice or optics. Equal political participation is a precondition for policy and principles that are truly democratic and inclusive. This is not a matter of symbolism. I have seen women the world over risking the security of their own person, their families, their bodies to take their place at the table and I have personally experienced what a difference it makes having women in the room. Different experiences, different perspectives, must have a voice at the table or they will not be represented.

I believe that Bill C-237 is a positive contribution to the ongoing dialogue that will lead to a future where women's voices will be equal to men's in this House and in the country.

● (1930)

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak on this private member's bill, Bill C-237, the candidate gender equity act.

Let me begin by clearly outlining what this bill would do. Clause 4 of this bill would change the Canada Elections Act to require political parties to run an equal number of male and female candidates. If the party failed to keep the difference between male and female candidates to fewer than 10%, then the party would be punished by being provided with a reduced subsidy following an election.

We want to encourage more women to seek office. I do not think there is any doubt about that. Of course we want to see women in positions of power who are engaged in business, politics, in the private sector, and in the public sector.

When I heard my colleague say that we now have women role models because the Prime Minister appointed a gender-equity cabinet, I would argue that there are many women, not only in this House, on both sides of this House, but within the private sector and the public sector who are excellent role models.

When I ran in the federal election, there were five candidates, four women and one man. As the first elected female mayor of the City of Surrey, along with a majority of women councillors, in fact, my political party had more female candidates than male candidates. We were all elected as a majority of women since 1996.

I have had the privilege over the years to work with many young women. In fact, I felt that it was incumbent on me as a woman to make sure that younger women and younger girls had the opportunity, and had every opportunity we could afford them; and incumbent on me to make sure that we were empowering them and encouraging them to pursue their dreams, and to help them reach their full potential.

In fact, I am sure that all of my female colleagues in this place, regardless of political affiliation, would agree that we all have a

distinct privilege of being in positions where we can provide support, mentorship, and guidance to women, not only within our own country but around the world as well.

All of my female colleagues stand in this House today not because a political party was required to fill a female quota to get its expenses covered, but rather because they earned the respect and the trust of their constituents who believed that they were the best candidate to represent them in Ottawa.

I want to see more women stepping forward in politics, not because a political party wants to make sure its expenses are covered to the full amount, but instead because they believe they are the best people to represent their community. I want to see people from all walks of life, regardless of age, ethnicity, or gender, representing Canada in this House.

The Conservatives appointed the first Canadian female cabinet minister in 1957. Half the candidates who ran for the position of Conservative interim leader last year were female. At present, the Conservative Party is the only party with official status in the House of Commons that has a female leader.

All of these successful women got to where they are because they were the best for the job, not because there was a female quota to be filled. Furthermore, this bill would erode democracy by forcing political parties to have a hand in local nomination races. This would do nothing to encourage parties to run the best person to represent the people in the riding.

It is for this reason that I cannot, as a woman, support this bill. I support the efforts of women who want to make their lives better, whose lives we should help make better, but I cannot support a bill that would force me and my colleagues into a quota system. It is not democracy, and that is not progress.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): 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.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

● (1935)

[*English*]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the collapse of commodities has led to layoffs in resource industries. Statistics Canada's latest labour force survey indicates that, over the past year, the number of unemployed Saskatchewan workers jumped by 49%, by far the largest increase of any province.

Adjournment Proceedings

Statistics Canada's latest employment insurance figures indicate that claims have increased more in Saskatchewan than in any other province over the past year. It also indicates that fewer than half of unemployed workers in Saskatchewan and across Canada are receiving EI benefits. This is the result of previous Conservative and Liberal governments cutting benefits and draining the EI fund.

We need to ensure that workers who paid into EI have access to decent benefits and help struggling Saskatchewan families. That is why the first issue I raised in question period after being elected was improved EI for laid-off resource workers.

I am proud that the NDP used one of our three opposition days after the election to propose protecting the EI fund to finance increased access based on a national entrance requirement of 360 insurable hours. Despite campaigning to fix EI, and having previously promised an entrance requirement of 360 hours, the Liberals voted against the motion. Despite presenting themselves as the champions of the oil and gas sector, Conservatives also voted against improved EI for laid-off resource workers. However, that was a couple of weeks before the budget.

In the budget, we got an extension of EI benefits supposedly for areas hit hard by the collapse of oil prices, but the measure left out Edmonton, Regina, and southern Saskatchewan, where most of our province's oil patch is located.

I asked about this exclusion in the first question period after the budget. The only thing stranger than the lack of response from the Liberals was the silence from Conservatives. Not a single Conservative MP from Edmonton or southern Saskatchewan stood up to ask why their constituents were excluded. Then, 10 days after the budget, the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle sent out a press release belatedly questioning the exclusion, but this past Friday, the member for Saskatoon—Grasswood stood up in question period and declared, "EI is not the solution".

We can all agree that EI is not the ultimate solution. In the long run, we must build an economy in which meaningful and gainful employment is available to everyone who wants it. However, right now, Saskatchewan families need all of our elected representatives speaking with one voice to have all parts of our province included in the EI extension. When Saskatchewan Conservatives declare that EI is not the solution, it undermines our efforts and undermines our province.

I implore the government to ignore the dissonance on EI from the Conservatives. The government should listen to the NDP, but more importantly, it should listen to the evidence and apply extended EI right across Saskatchewan.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from the member for Regina—Lewvan.

I just returned from the conference. The Canada Building Trades Union is hosting a conference in town this week. I had an opportunity to speak with a number of trade unionists, building trades representatives from Saskatchewan and Alberta. Obviously, there is a great deal of concern around what has taken place in the commodities with the commodities downturn.

I spoke with a couple of guys from Fort McMurray. Kevin Thomas, a buddy of mine who represents the operating engineers, lost his home in Abasands. Certainly the situation there is one that is not exclusive to the ministry. All members of this House and all Canadians are very concerned.

The question goes to what is going on with southern Saskatchewan specifically. The minister was in southern Saskatchewan recently. He had an opportunity to speak with workers, employers and labour leaders with regard to the EI rates.

Certainly, as my colleague referred to, the most recent numbers that have been published show the national numbers have been fairly steady. There has been a 0.1% increase in unemployment in Saskatchewan. Specifically in southern Saskatchewan there are a number of concerns.

As we get into some of the information, most of the jobs that have been lost have been part-time jobs, and my colleague would know that. Saskatchewan still remains below the national average. I do not want to dismiss the comments my colleague referred to. We want to see the workers in this country back to work and certainly that is what the government is focused on, but the employment insurance program has to be there for workers who find themselves without employment through no fault of their own.

My colleague did make comment about what was talked about in the platform and what was delivered in the budget, but in fact, as a government we came forward with \$2.5 billion of investment in the EI program, which I know all workers in Saskatchewan will benefit from. It is going from a two-week to a one-week waiting period. There are also the working while on claim provisions and the provisions around work sharing. Those are all very important investments that this government has made.

I would assure the member that the most recent statistics are being assessed by the department. I look forward to working with him going forward.

● (1940)

Mr. Erin Weir: Mr. Speaker, I certainly appreciate the government's response.

Unsurprisingly, there was a mention of some EI measures in the budget. I would make the point that the budget document itself projects that employment insurance benefits will be held below employment insurance premium revenues for four out of the next five years. I believe there is room to do more. I think one of the obvious ways to do more is to include Saskatchewan's oil patch in this temporary extension of EI benefits.

Another one of the points we heard is that Saskatchewan remains below the national average in terms of the overall unemployment rate, which is fair enough, but this temporary extension of benefits was not about an extension for those regions that had the highest unemployment rates. The duration of benefits already varies based on the regional unemployment rate.

The stated objective was to provide additional help to regions that had seen a particularly large increase in unemployment, and southern Saskatchewan—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is correct in stating that the adjustments that have been made for the 12 regions were to address that sudden, significant, and sustained spike, the shock within the employment numbers.

Again, these numbers are fresh. These numbers are being assessed by the department. The minister is fully engaged and will continue to monitor the situation and continue to make sure that employment insurance is there for Canadians when they need it.

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am picking up on a conversation we had with the government back in March in relation to a failure to respond to first nation leadership letters around the federal process on the Site C dam.

The New Democrats, along with many other Canadians, have believed that the Government of Canada has an intense, responsible, and heartfelt requirement to engage in a true nation-to-nation relationship with indigenous peoples to work together and to protect the environment. The Liberal Party campaigned along the same lines. Therefore, I want to delve into this a bit more.

In the mandate letter to cabinet ministers, the Prime Minister indicated this was their highest responsibility. He has repeated this deep commitment to the nation-to-nation relationship being the most important relationship to him, a deep commitment of the government, that as a country we need this to work well. I stand here in support of that intention.

Back in March, along with a number of other New Democrat colleagues, we met with representatives of Treaty 8 first nations. Among them was Helen Knott, the great great-granddaughter of Chief Bigfoot, the last chief to sign Treaty 8. She spoke with us about concerns around work camps, around a megaproject like Site C. She spoke about violence against women, and what made people more vulnerable in those situations.

Some of her colleagues spoke about fisheries violations at the Site C dam. They had a deep concern about the federal government not stopping its practice of issuing fisheries permits. They wanted the government to sit back, pause and take the time to investigate those reported fisheries violations. They felt the whole process needed a bit of a time out. The leaders, at that point, indicated very much that they had an expectation of that engagement and correspondence following the election.

Adjournment Proceedings

When we spoke in March, the question was why the letters had not been answered, what the process was, whether the government would suspend federal decisions on Site C at the time so there could be a time out and some back and forth conversation. I would like to know what has happened since March. Has there been any further correspondence between the government and the chiefs? Has the government suspended its issuance of further fisheries permits around the Site C dam?

• (1945)

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government, as the Prime Minister and others have said many times, is committed to working collaboratively with Canada's indigenous peoples to achieve results that will be beneficial for all Canadians. We made this commitment during the election campaign and we have made it a key priority for the early months of this government.

When we unveiled our budget in March the member opposite may have seen that it contained important investments relating to ensuring that indigenous peoples have similar opportunities and prospects for the future as do all Canadians.

Our government is committed to building a renewed nation-to-nation relationship with indigenous peoples that is based on recognition of rights, respect, co-operation, and partnership.

Our government has also made it a priority to review Canada's environmental assessment processes. Our goal is to develop and implement a robust federal process that is based on science, protects the environment, provides certainty for the resource sector, and importantly, respects the rights of indigenous peoples.

As such, this review, which we will launch later this year, will be conducted in close consultation with indigenous groups. One of its aims will be to enhance consultation, engagement, and the participatory capacity of indigenous peoples in the review of proposed major resource development projects.

On the specific matter of Site C, the member opposite is currently aware that the matter is in front of the courts, and as such it would be inappropriate to comment in great detail. What I can say in response to the hon. member's question are a few notes relating to how we arrived here today.

In the fall of 2014, the former government approved the project and set legally binding conditions with which the proponent must comply. Permits were issued in the fall of 2015 and the project is now in the construction phase. BC Hydro, the project proponent, is required to meet the conditions set out in the decision statement. I can assure the hon. member that Environment and Climate Change Canada is active in verifying compliance with the conditions.

Our government is fully committed to engaging in discussions with indigenous leaders on how we can work together on issues related to consultation, natural resource development, and environmental protection.

Adjournment Proceedings

Consistent with this commitment, the minister met recently with Roland Willson and Lynette Tsakoza of the West Moberly and Prophet River first nations to discuss their concerns about the Site C project. During that meeting she had the opportunity to hear their suggestions and their concerns.

In closing, I would reiterate to the House that this government takes environmental assessment matters very seriously. We are also firmly committed to a renewed, nation-to-nation relationship with indigenous peoples based on recognition of rights, respect, co-operation, and partnership.

● (1950)

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Mr. Speaker, we heard from a number of first nations leaders, the Assembly of First Nations, the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs, that have written letters of concern to the Prime Minister.

Could the parliamentary secretary please let the House know whether those letters have been replied to, and if so, is he willing to table them in the House for all of us to see?

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson: Mr. Speaker, there have been numerous meetings and engagements with first nations communities relating to Site C and a range of other resource projects. As I have outlined, there is an intent to engage robustly in the development of new environmental assessment measures going forward. We remain committed to the development of a nation-to-nation relationship going forward. That is a solid commitment made by this government and something we intend to carry on with.

[*Translation*]

HOUSING

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, once again this evening, I am continuing my crusade to get pyrrhotite victims in Trois-Rivières the financial help they are entitled to.

I put this down as an adjournment debate just a few days before the budget. At the time, I was expecting the worst, and I think the worst is pretty much what we got. It all started during the election campaign, when I felt like Thomas, the biblical character who refused to believe until he saw the holes in Christ's hands. I found it hard to believe that the Liberals would really do anything to help all pyrrhotite victims.

I do not know how to describe the offer in the budget. Objectively, it is a final offer for \$30 million, or \$10 million per year over the next three years, to help pyrrhotite victims. What does this really mean for people affected by pyrrhotite? That \$30 million will help about 75 people per year over three years. That is 225 people out of as many as 4,000 families afflicted by this terrible problem.

Furthermore, I imagine that the approach, which requires this \$30 million to be channelled to the provincial assistance program, will vaguely seem like charity and that the federal government will not accept any responsibility for this disaster. I am anxious to hear the government's response.

By way of explanation, I will provide two quotes from the member for Saint-Maurice—Champlain, who is the MP for the riding next to mine. Oddly enough, his views during the election campaign and after the budget was tabled were rather different.

During the campaign, he said, "We will help the victims because human misery knows no borders or jurisdictions." After the budget was tabled, my colleague said, "It is primarily a provincial matter."

That was the answer I heard for four and a half years from the Conservatives. It was their main justification for not paying a dime. They said that this was a provincial jurisdiction. The difference is that the Liberals are paying out \$30 million, while saying that this is a provincial jurisdiction.

Therefore, here is the most crucial question, and I would like to get a clear, straight, precise answer: does the Liberal government recognize that it is in part responsible for the disaster that has affected almost 4,000 families in Mauricie?

● (1955)

[*English*]

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Trois-Rivières for his question and for his commitment on the pyrrhotite issue.

Our government recognizes that this is a very important matter for people in the region of Mauricie, and for other regions of Quebec. The pyrrhotite problem has been known for some time now, since the mid-1990s, when contractors in some parts of Quebec began to use concrete containing this mineral to build foundations. Pyrrhotite can cause swelling over time, as concrete slabs are exposed to water. This has led to deterioration of the foundations of homes where pyrrhotite is present in the concrete, along with some commercial and institutional buildings.

In June 2014, the Québec Superior Court concluded that the technical consultants, suppliers, and contractors involved in the supply of the faulty concrete were responsible for this calamity. Nevertheless, it is the individual homeowners who continue to suffer financial hardship. This is not a problem that can normally be repaired with caulking or sealant; it is usually necessary to replace the foundation.

We can all understand the distress that a homeowner would feel after making the most important investment of his or her life, only to find that the home's foundation is falling apart. The Government of Canada recognizes this distress, and we are committed to working with the Government of Quebec to help the people of Mauricie affected by this problem.

That is why, in budget 2016, we provide up to \$30 million over three years, starting this year, to help homeowners who are dealing with the consequences of pyrrhotite. The responsibility for regulating the design and construction of new homes and buildings, and for enforcing the existing building codes and standards, falls under provincial and territorial jurisdiction.

Adjournment Proceedings

As honourable members may know, the Government of Quebec has already provided \$30 million in funding to help homeowners repair or replace foundations damaged by pyrrhotite. I would encourage members from across the way to join with this government and support the budget implementation act that sets forth budgetary measures that benefit Canadians from coast to coast to coast, specifically the middle class.

Our government cares about Canadian homeowners and is investing in their well-being. Although the Government of Canada bears no responsibility or liability for this situation, this does not mean that we are willing to ignore the plight of affected homeowners. When the Prime Minister visited the Mauricie region, he acknowledged that the people struggling with pyrrhotite were victims of both a human and economic tragedy. This is a situation that they did not create, nor do most homeowners have the financial means to extricate themselves from it. The Prime Minister promised to make the necessary investments to help affected homeowners, and budget 2016 fulfills that commitment.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his presentation on pyrrhotite, a topic with which I am quite familiar.

I am particularly interested in support for the victims. We just heard the exact same argument that the Conservatives used. The building code falls under provincial jurisdiction. Yes, we know. The problem is that the standards in the building code are federal ones, such as the quality standard for aggregates used in concrete. This is a federal responsibility.

Will the government commit to amending the standard to ensure that this never happens again in Mauricie or anywhere else in

Canada? In the meantime, while the legal proceedings take their course, can we agree to provide support for the victims? No one is going to get rich off this problem. If the private company ever pays, the homeowners will return the money to the government. We are not talking about a lot of money.

[*English*]

Mr. Terry Duguid: Mr. Speaker, the previous Conservative government did not allocate \$30 million, as we have. However, I want to thank the hon. member for his concern for homeowners in the Mauricie region, whose foundations have been damaged by the presence of pyrrhotite. I can assure him that we are also concerned on this side of the House, and we intend to take action.

We applaud the Government of Quebec's commitment to helping these homeowners and have pledged to work with the province on this pressing issue. By providing up to \$30 million over three years to help homeowners who are dealing with the consequences of pyrrhotite, the Government of Canada is effectively doubling the financial assistance that has been offered to affected families and individuals. This is the right thing to do, and I am proud that our government is contributing to the solution.

• (2000)

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 8 p.m.)

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