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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Friday, December 2, 2016

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, December 2, 2016

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2016, NO. 2

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-29, A second Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 22, 2016 and other measures, as reported (with amendment) from the committee.

•(1000)

[*English*]

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): There are 24 motions in amendment standing on the Notice Paper for the report stage of Bill C-29.

[*Translation*]

Motion No. 4 will not be selected by the Chair as it could have been presented in committee

[*English*]

All remaining motions have been examined and the Chair is satisfied that they meet the guidelines expressed in notes to Standing Order 76.1(5) regarding the selection of motions in amendment at report stage.

Motions Nos. 1 to 3 and 5 to 24 will be grouped for debate and voted upon according to the voting pattern available at the table.

[*Translation*]

I will now put Motions Nos. 1 to 3 and 5 to 24 to the House.

[*English*]

MOTIONS IN AMENDMENT

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.) moved:

Motion No. 1

That Bill C-29 be amended by deleting Clause 1.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC) moved Motions Nos. 2 and 3.

Motion No. 2

That Bill C-29 be amended by deleting Clause 29.

Motion No. 3

That Bill C-29 be amended by deleting Clause 44.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ) moved Motions Nos. 5 to 23.

Motion No. 5

That Bill C-29 be amended by deleting Clause 117.

Motion No. 6

That Bill C-29 be amended by deleting Clause 118.

Motion No. 7

That Bill C-29 be amended by deleting Clause 119.

Motion No. 8

That Bill C-29 be amended by deleting Clause 120.

Motion No. 9

That Bill C-29 be amended by deleting Clause 121.

Motion No. 10

That Bill C-29 be amended by deleting Clause 122.

Motion No. 11

That Bill C-29 be amended by deleting Clause 123.

Motion No. 12

That Bill C-29 be amended by deleting Clause 124.

Motion No. 13

That Bill C-29 be amended by deleting Clause 125.

Motion No. 14

That Bill C-29 be amended by deleting Clause 126.

Motion No. 15

That Bill C-29 be amended by deleting Clause 127.

Motion No. 16

That Bill C-29 be amended by deleting Clause 128.

Motion No. 17

That Bill C-29 be amended by deleting Clause 129.

Motion No. 18

That Bill C-29 be amended by deleting Clause 130.

Motion No. 19

That Bill C-29 be amended by deleting Clause 131.

Motion No. 20

That Bill C-29 be amended by deleting Clause 132.

Motion No. 21

That Bill C-29 be amended by deleting Clause 133.

Motion No. 22

That Bill C-29 be amended by deleting Clause 134.

Motion No. 23

That Bill C-29 be amended by deleting Clause 135.

Government Orders

•(1005)

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The member for Saanich—Gulf Islands is not in the chamber this morning, and I will not be able to move Motion No. 24.

The hon. government House leader.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what a privilege it is once again to stand and talk about a bill that is going to be implementing our national budget. It is a budget that I believe is unprecedented in so many ways. If I were to think about a single message that comes out of this budget, it is the issue of Canada's middle class and those aspiring to become part of our middle class. We would have to go back many years or decades to see a budget that has done so much in terms of what I suggest is a redistribution of Canada's wealth, but with a special focus on our middle class.

Over the last decade, we have seen a great deal of concern in regard to how well Canada's middle class has been doing. Not only here in government but even when we were the third party, there was a constant theme being raised, and that was a caring attitude toward our middle class and those aspiring to be part of Canada's middle class.

We have a Prime Minister and a Minister of Finance who have put our middle class as priority one.

There is so much in this budget we can get behind and support. We often hear from opposition benches about the importance of Canada's middle class. For the first time, in a tangible way, they have the opportunity to vote for a budget that does a great deal for Canada's middle class. Let me explain why I believe that to be the case.

Shortly after the election, we had a substantial increase in taxes for Canada's wealthiest, the 1%, if I can put it that way. Most significantly, we had a substantial decrease in taxes for Canada's middle class. What does that mean? Someone who is a factory worker or a health care worker, a person in the middle class, is seeing a substantial decrease in taxes, which means that we are putting more money in the pockets of Canada's middle class.

Many of my colleagues who have had the opportunity to talk about this budget have said that we even go beyond the middle class, and that is true. There are a number of initiatives within the budget that address other issues. I would like to focus on a couple.

One deals with Canada's children. We have the Canada child benefit program, a program that has been enhanced by seeing more money going toward children. The biggest benefactors are going to be those children who are in the lower-income strata. For example, we will see thousands of children being lifted out of poverty as a direct result of the budget. We will see taxable income considerations given as part of the Canada child benefit program.

Someone who is a multi-millionaire does not need the tax credit as much as a single parent who has two or three children and is finding it difficult to make ends meet. I think Canadians would see that as a

fair taxation policy. It is a great program, and as I said, it will lift literally tens of thousands of children out of poverty.

•(1010)

Another issue that is often talked about among my colleagues is the guaranteed income supplement. We know first hand, because shortly after the election, we engaged in a discussion on the types of things we heard at the door from our senior population, those who were finding it very difficult to make ends meet. We have seniors who are put in a position of having to decide on food versus medication. Far too often, they put their health in jeopardy as a direct result of not having enough money. The substantial increase to the GIS will make a difference, particularly for single seniors, who will receive, in the worst conditions, in excess of \$900 more per year. If they are making \$10,000 or \$12,000 a year, that \$900 is going to make a significant difference. I talked about lifting children out of poverty. This would lift seniors out of poverty.

I have brought up those three major points: tax cuts for the middle class; the helping hand; and addressing the issue of poverty, whether for seniors or children. This is one of the reasons I believe that what we have before us is a progressive budget that would move Canada in a forward direction. The redistribution of wealth would also help Canada's economy. We believe that if we have a strengthened middle class and more money in the hands of those individuals who are spending the money and cultivating the economy, we are, in fact, giving more strength to Canada's economy. That is indeed warranted.

There is so much in the budget one could talk about. We can talk about the importance of health care. I can make reference to the commitment not only in terms of dollars but in terms of a Minister of Health who is working diligently with our provinces and territories to try to get a new health care accord. We might have to be patient. It is more important that we get it right, but for the first time, we have a government that is attempting to get a new health care accord.

We can talk about the environment. We have a progressive government that is dealing with environmental issues. One can cite the Paris agreement to a price on carbon as being positive. Only the Conservative Party seems to be offside of all the political entities across the country on that front, and I must say, on a number of other fronts.

We can talk about infrastructure and the record amount of money being put into Canada's infrastructure, unlike the Conservatives, who would talk about putting money into it, but it never really materialized. We have a government that already, within 12 months of being in office, has hundreds of projects up and running, in co-operation with the different stakeholders, in particular our provinces and municipalities, which have done a phenomenal job getting those projects up and running. We have a government that is committed to Canada's infrastructure in every region of our country. This is something that I believe is being well received.

The bottom line is that it is a good-news budget. If members support tax decreases for our industrial workers and professionals, whether health care workers, firefighters, or any profession out there getting those tax breaks, this is a budget they should seriously look at voting in favour of. This bill we are talking about would implement that budget.

Government Orders

If they are concerned about issues such as poverty, this is a budget they should be voting for.

• (1015)

The only real and consistent criticism from the Conservative Party with respect to this budget is related to the issue of money, or the deficit. I am anticipating that will likely be one of the questions asked. I will let the opposition know that, as a party—

My time has run out. Hopefully I will be able to provide that answer shortly.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my question will not be about the deficit but about the frankness of politicians.

Each one of us was elected on a platform. People have the right to decide if we are on the right side or the wrong side. Yes, we are democratic and respect democracy, but we also respect that we must be very frank with people.

The Liberals were elected under a platform in which they said there would be a small deficit of \$10 billion, but they tabled a budget with a \$30-billion deficit.

[*Translation*]

Why did they not tell Canadians the truth?

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I anticipated that I would be asked a question of that nature, and that is why, in my concluding remarks, I was getting to the issue of budget deficits.

To assure Canadians very clearly, if we look at it from a historical perspective, Liberal administrations have cleaned up Conservative administrations with regard to budgets. The preoccupation that the Conservatives have on this is unjustified. If we look back, the Conservatives accumulated a debt of over \$150 billion, a record amount, under Stephen Harper.

Yes, there is a budget deficit. We told Canadians that there would in fact be a budget deficit. We believe it is time to start investing in infrastructure and Canadians. At some point, as Liberals have done in the past, there will be a return to a balanced budget. Now is the time that we should be investing in Canada's infrastructure and Canadians, and that is what this budget is doing.

• (1020)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there are so many things I could say. I will focus on Bill C-29 because we will be studying it at third reading.

I would sincerely like to know why the member was the first to speak this morning. Is it because the Liberal Party, the government, decided to move deletion of clause 1, the bill's short title, which is "Budget Implementation Act, 2016, No. 2"?

I would like to know why the government wants to delete the short title. Is there a valid reason why it wants to delete its own proposed title? Was this just a political ploy to usurp the opposition's traditional right to be the first to speak to these bills and amendments?

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I can assure that when we look at the amendment that has been proposed, for the most part it is about ensuring that debate occurs at the report stage. We are already into that debate. I would encourage other members to participate. At the end of the day, this is a responsible approach. There are always tactics on both sides of the House. I can assure the member that it is not coming just from one direction. This is, in good part, a response to opposition and the concerns that might arise.

The bottom line is that we have a day to debate Bill C-29, the budget and government priorities. I would encourage other members to speak. We have had plenty of time already to speak on Bill C-29, whether it was at second reading or the committee stage. There has probably been more time for debate on this budget implementation bill than many of the Harper Conservative budget implementation bills. It is a pleasure for me to put a few words on the record.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak at this stage of Bill C-29, which seeks to implement key measures from the budget that was tabled, voted on, and passed in the House a few months ago.

First of all, I want to set the record straight for Canadians. I want to tell it like it is and give a clear picture of the situation, ever since Canadians voted for a change in government.

Canada was in an enviable fiscal position. The Conservative administration left a surplus of \$2.9 billion. Canada had the best debt-to-GDP ratio among the G7 nations. Canada was the best of the best. Canada also had the best job creation record of all the G7 nations. Canada was the country that fared best. It was also the country that recovered the quickest from the terrible financial crisis that was felt all over the globe in 2008 and 2009. That is the Conservative record. The Conservatives definitely left the house in order, so to speak. Unfortunately, the Liberals are currently destroying our economy. In fact, that is why we strongly oppose Bill C-29, which seeks to implement the measures in the budget. We think it is a very bad budget. Why?

For decades, Canadians made every effort that was required, including under the leadership of the Right Hon. Paul Martin, a distinguished and world-renowned finance minister. He fought mercilessly against the deficit. Now the current government is sending Canada down another unfortunate deficit spiral. The thing is, we are not in an economic crisis, as was the case when the Conservatives were in power and we had to deal with this difficult situation.

What does this mean? It means that we are asking our children, our grandchildren, and our great-grandchildren to foot the bill for this deficit. They are the ones who will have to pay for the current government's mismanagement. Worse yet, the party in power got elected barely a year and a half ago by saying that they would run a small deficit of \$10 billion, but we would return to a balanced budget during the fourth year of their term.

Government Orders

Nothing could be further from the truth today. The deficit is currently \$30 billion. From the economic update we know that the Liberals will continue to spiral badly by inflicting another \$32 billion in spending over the next five years. The sad reality that is slapping us in the face is that the government is unable to tell us when we will return to a balanced budget.

There is not one business owner, father, mother, or head of household who manages their budget without the expectation that one day they will keep their head above water. That is exactly the situation that the government is forcing us into. We are drowning in debt, but we have no idea when we are going to come up for air. This is unprecedented and unheard of. It is unacceptable. It is the Liberal way.

If only the Liberals would at least acknowledge that they said some foolish things during the election campaign, like running small deficits, which is not at all true because the deficit is three times the amount forecast. If only they would tell us, for example, not to worry at all because they are going to balance the budget in five years. That would be very wrong, but we would at least have an idea of the situation. However, that is not the case. This short-sighted government has absolutely no idea when it will balance the budget or how it will manage to eliminate the deficit.

I can assure Canadians that the next balanced budget will be a budget tabled by the Conservative government, which will be elected by Canadians in three years. That is a fact.

I would also like to remind members that the Liberals bragged about how, in the budget, there would finally be tax cuts for Canadians and how all Canadians would benefit from them. Well, aren't they generous. The reality is quite the opposite. The measures proposed by the government will have no impact on the taxes that 65% of Canadians have to pay. There will be no tax cuts for 65% of Canadians. Who then will benefit from the announced tax cuts? It is Canadians who earn between \$140,000 and \$200,000 a year. Is a person who earns \$199,999 a year part of the middle class? I have my doubts.

I would like to point out right away that I am in a position of conflict of interest. As an MP, I earn around \$170,000 a year, so I am one of the lucky ones who will benefit from these measures. With a salary like that, I do not feel as though I am part of the middle class. The government has been boasting that it is helping the middle class, the least fortunate, and the most vulnerable. Stop right there. In reality, 65% of Canadians will not benefit at all from these measures. Those who will benefit the most are wealthier Canadians who earn between \$144,000 and \$200,000 a year.

● (1025)

What is more, this budget hinders the creation of jobs and wealth because it does not do much to help our small and medium-sized businesses. For us, the Conservatives, small businesses are the backbone of our economy. They create jobs and wealth. We need to do everything we can to help them, not hold them back. Nevertheless, that is what this government is doing with the budget. It is imposing the Liberal carbon tax. It is imposing new fees on employers and employees under the Canada pension plan. It is failing to keep its promise by not lowering the tax rate of SMEs. The government was supposed to lower the tax rate from 10.5% to 9%

but failed to do so. These are three measures that work against our business owners, our job creators and our creators of wealth. That is why we are completely against this bill.

I would also like to draw members' attention to a small but very important detail. As the saying goes, the devil is in the details, and in this case we are talking about consumer protection.

First of all, I would like to recognize the excellent job that was done by the member for Joliette, who really did the kind of work one would expect from an opposition member. He did a great job, and I would like to commend him for that.

What happened? This has to do with the enforcement of the legislation on banks and the management of financial institutions.

Let us recall the events: in 2012, the Conservative government passed legislation to implement, across the entire country, certain measures concerning the management of financial and banking institutions. Part of that law was challenged in court. In 2014, the Supreme Court ruled specifically on the issue of the Consumer Protection Act in Quebec. The act was not constitutional, so it had to be changed.

Since we are institutional people and we respect our institutions, we are going to comply with the Supreme Court's decision. However, in this new bill the government is proposing measures that, unfortunately, do not meet the requirements of the Supreme Court ruling. Along with the members for Joliette, Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques and others, we questioned senior officials in parliamentary committee in order to get specific answers to very specific questions, so that we could find out whether they were complying with the Supreme Court's ruling or not.

Unfortunately, I cannot say that we were convinced. There are still flaws in the legislative measures proposed in Bill C-29 on the issue of Quebec's Consumer Protection Act. We are not the only ones with concerns. The National Assembly has passed a motion asking the government to suspend the clauses of Bill C-29 that affect the Consumer Protection Act.

If we want to make a law that complies with the Supreme Court ruling, we have to talk to the lead stakeholders, because it is abundantly clear that if the bill is passed, it is going to be challenged in court on this issue, among others. It is not just us who are saying so, it is the National Assembly.

What is the Quebec National Assembly? Certainly it is the members of the opposition, but it is also the government. The day before yesterday, the Quebec justice minister, who is a member on the other side of the river, not so far from here, said that she was concerned about certain clauses in Bill C-29.

There is still time for the government to seize the opportunity and just do what ought to be done. It should pick up the phone, call the justice minister, and ask her what is not working and what should be drafted to make it work. That is what a government in touch with the reality of its citizens would do, much like us. I recall that we had an interpretation of the matter in 2012. The Supreme Court contradicted that interpretation; we are institutional people and we respect the Supreme Court. We therefore must make every effort to ensure that this is not challenged and it is done the right way.

Government Orders

I do not mean to insult any legal eagles in any way, but we must realize that it is not a humble country lawyer who will be challenging this. It is the Government of Quebec that will be going to court to challenge the provisions affecting the Consumer Protection Act.

On this point, I urge the government to go back and do its homework, and indeed I invite the government to look at the entire bill and really do its homework for the economy as a whole and for all Canadians.

● (1030)

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Gatineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from the Standing Committee on Finance for his excellent speech. He speaks of the legacy of the Conservative government. Indeed, the Conservative legacy is one of anemic growth; they ran deficits for nine consecutive years after inheriting a healthy financial situation from Mr. Martin and Mr. Goodale, an infrastructure deficit, a social deficit, a social housing deficit, and others still.

Now we are considering ways for the Canadian economy to recover. During the federal campaign, his party and the New Democratic party said that the budget had to be balanced at any cost. His party left a legacy of anemic growth and it was going to balance the budget at any cost.

Today, I would like the member to tell us what his plan is to get us over the slump and address dropping oil prices, the infrastructure deficit and the social deficit. What is his plan? He is very good at criticizing, but what is his plan to improve and rehabilitate the Canadian economy?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Before giving the floor to the hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent, I would like to remind the members in the House today not to name still-sitting members of the House. The hon. member named two persons, one of whom is a sitting member. This reminder is meant for everyone present. I know that it is Friday and we are eager to return to our constituencies.

The hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent has the floor.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to answer my colleague's question.

Indeed, it is true that, in the opposition, we have to criticize, but we were in power, and we campaigned on a platform which, from our point of view, would have a stimulating effect on the Canadian economy. Our approach was realistic. Our government made Canada number one in terms of economic performance in the face of the worst financial crisis, in 2008-09. The OECD and the G7 both say so. That is why we left Canada's fiscal house in order, with a surplus of \$2.9 billion. That is positive.

We also made Canada the first job creator in the entire G7. Canada has the best debt-to-GDP ratio in the entire G7. Why did we have to begrudgingly run deficits? Because we were facing the worst economic crisis. It is in challenging and difficult times that the truly great shine, and that is what we did. We are very proud of that.

The worst thing to do is to impose taxes and additional costs on our businesses—something we did not do and that we will never do.

● (1035)

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank you for giving me the opportunity to ask my colleague a question.

I have just heard the question that was asked by our colleague from Gatineau, who sits on the Standing Committee on Finance. He was talking about deficits, which made up a large part of the speech by my colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent.

However, if I remember correctly, during the election campaign the Liberals promised to run small deficits so that they could invest in infrastructure. Now what we are seeing is that the deficits are bigger, but everyone recognizes that, for now, not much has been put into infrastructure. In the end, the government is going to have to face reality and invest in infrastructure. It is not by calling on the private sector with a big infrastructure bank that they are going to manage to keep the promises that were made.

I would therefore like to hear my colleague's comments on this situation that I would call extremely paradoxical.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, that is quite true, and I recall that the NDP had the courage, the honour and the dignity to run on a no-deficit platform—a very bold move. I salute his keen foresight on the matter.

Mr. Speaker, did you hear any talk of the infrastructure investment bank during the campaign? No. It was totally absent from the Liberal platform, and now it is a major part of the government's economic game plan. What will it do? It will receive \$15 billion slated for investment in order to attract foreign investment. Why?

Nothing currently prevents foreign investment from coming into Canada: quite the contrary. Nothing prevents private partners from working hand-in-hand on infrastructure projects with the Canadian government. We call that PPP Canada. It exists, it is going on, and it is working. The Windsor-Detroit bridge that we are currently building between our two great countries, our two great nations, is a public-private partnership. We are able to work that way.

Why did the government dream up this new infrastructure bank if not to please its many pals once again?

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, our amendments to Bill C-29 all have the same objective, which is to uphold the rights of Quebec and the rights of Quebecers. For those who may not know this, we often do great things in Quebec. For instance, Quebec has the best consumer protection laws anywhere in the Americas.

It is precisely these kinds of Quebec differences that Bill C-29 threatens. The banks have always found that Quebec's Consumer Protection Act favours ordinary people too much. The banks have always relied on their ally in Ottawa to try to get around it. This is simply a new chapter in the showdown.

Government Orders

Bill C-29 is a legislative and constitutional power grab. It is a Christmas gift from the federal government to the banks, on the backs of Quebecers. We cannot let this happen.

In this mammoth bill, the current Liberal government buried an amendment to the Bank Act that includes a mysterious new financial consumer protection framework. The effect of this new clause is clear: Ottawa wants the banks to be above the law in Quebec. Government officials confirmed this before a parliamentary committee.

We have to go back to the early 2000s to understand what is happening now. An unpleasant surprise awaited Quebec consumers returning from vacation: their banks had started charging fees without telling them. This despite the fact that the Consumer Protection Act prevents banks from claiming costs “unless the amount thereof is precisely indicated in the contract”. Ripped-off consumers who tried in vain to get their banks to reimburse them turned to the banking ombudsman, who did nothing.

The consumers then availed themselves of the recourse provided in the Consumer Protection Act and filed a class action lawsuit in 2003. Their case made it to the Supreme Court, culminating in the Marcotte decision in 2014 after 11 years of litigation. The banks were forced to pay back \$32 million to the people they tried to swindle.

I would like to comment on the Marcotte case because it led to Bill C-29. The ruling made it clear that, while the Bank Act governs the banks' operations, it does not govern their consumer relations. That was a Supreme Court ruling. The federal law and Quebec's law can therefore both apply because Ottawa's law governs the banks' operations and Quebec's law governs consumer rights, and that is where Bill C-29 comes in.

Now that the federal legislation will contain a tiny section called the “Financial Consumer Protection Framework”, the banks will be able to claim that the Canada Bank Act also covers consumer protection. They will therefore be able to argue before the courts that they basically need not comply with Quebec law. At present, consumers can turn to the Quebec Office de la protection du consommateur to assert their rights, which has a simple and effective process. It is free, which ensures that even the most vulnerable can access it.

If that is not enough, consumers can initiate class proceedings and ask a judge for a ruling. This bill would eliminate all that. From now on, consumers would only be able to approach the banks' ombudsman, an officially neutral employee, but one appointed and paid by the banks. What is worse, the ombudsman cannot make recommendations and cannot impose a penalty or fine.

That is how the Liberals are going to eliminate all the legal protections enjoyed by Quebec consumers with respect to hidden fees, unilateral changes to fees or services by the banks, the requirement to provide a contract in French, the ban on misleading advertising, and the possibility of cancelling an unfair contract. This will only benefit the banks.

Our rights are being pushed aside on a promise that Bay Street will be nice to us. That says it all. Justice is being replaced by an ombudsman appointed by the banks, someone whose authority is

limited to handing down a slap on the wrist. This is very serious. It is an attack on Quebec and Quebecers. In English Canada, there is minimal consumer protection when it comes to the banks. Outside Quebec, Bill C-29 will have little impact. Back home, this will be terrible.

I want to address the 40 Liberal members from Quebec. Instead of reading a French translation of a press release that was written in Toronto, they should be defending their people and telling their colleagues how good our system is for regular people. They should be educating their colleagues instead of acting like doormats.

• (1040)

Yesterday, during question period, I was quite troubled to hear the response of the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance. He said that the Marcotte decision called on the government for a response and that Bill C-29 is that response. It is incredible.

In Marcotte, the court was not calling on the federal government. It was addressing the banks. When the Minister of Finance confuses the banks and the federal government, that is saying something. To him, it is six of one and half a dozen of the other. Personally, I am siding with regular folks and not the minister's friends who work on Bay Street.

That is not all. Not only is the government siding with the banks and against Quebec's consumers, but it is creating a loophole that every profiteer is eager to exploit. Today, it is the banks that the federal government is putting above the law. What will be next? Are wireless service providers going to ask for Ottawa's help to double how much they charge, without warning? Are internet service providers going to ask the same? Are we no longer going to be able to go after airlines to get our flight reimbursed if it is cancelled? Is that it?

Our amendment resolves all of these problems. It ensures compliance with the Consumer Protection Act, the best in the Americas. In contrast, Bill C-29 opens the door to abuse. It opens the door to court challenges. For 10 years, Quebecers will not know what law protects them. For 10 years, Quebecers will be better off abandoning their banks in favour of caisses populaires and the legal certainty under which they operate. At the risk of overstating the case, the federal government is even harming banks.

I urge my colleagues to support the amendments I proposed. If I understand correctly, the NDP and the Conservatives already support them. Our job is to represent Canadians, not powerful lobbies.

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Gatineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

Like him, I served on the Standing Committee on Finance when the proposed amendments to the Bank Act were being examined. I think my colleague is laying it on a bit thick. There is nothing here that will take away protections for Quebec consumers in any area.

This bill is a response to the Supreme Court ruling requiring the Government of Canada to draft legislation and amend the Bank Act in order to provide a framework for a well-designed, well-thought-out process that fully meets the public's and consumers' needs with regard to our national financial institutions.

Government Orders

What does he suggest that the Government of Canada do? The government was instructed to do this work by the Supreme Court of Canada. As my colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent said, we are already an institution here, and we need to fulfill those requirements. What does he suggest that the government do to respond to the Marcotte ruling?

• (1045)

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Mr. Speaker, I strongly disagree with my colleague from Gatineau, who said that consumers will not lose out.

Bill C-29 and clause 131 set out a federal consumer protection regime for bank customers that will take precedence over Quebec's Consumer Protection Act, which is much stronger and goes much farther. That act will no longer apply.

Ultimately, Bill C-29 will exempt banks from Quebec's 112-page Consumer Protection Act and 400 pages of regulations, all of which are rock-solid parts of the civil code that has been in place for 400 years. Even the federal government is subject to it in Quebec. This bill exempts banks from that legislation in exchange for 16 paragraphs written in the conditional tense, all of which are toothless and offer no protection whatsoever to consumers. This is a major step backward. To suggest otherwise is a monumental mistake.

The government needs to reconsider Bill C-29 and accept our amendments to ensure that the Consumer Protection Act will apply in its entirety to Quebec's banking sector.

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague a question, but I will begin by congratulating him on the work he has done.

My question is about our Liberal colleague's last comment. That National Assembly unanimously asked the federal government to change its mind on this issue.

When my colleague says that people are blowing things out of proportion, I feel as though he is telling members of the National Assembly that they lack judgment and cannot see what is good for the people of the province of Quebec.

What does my colleague think of the Liberal member's comment?

Des voix: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Before I recognize the member for Joliette, I wish to remind hon. members that they are allowed to cross the aisle to speak to one another. There is no need to speak across the aisle, which makes it hard for the Chair to hear what the hon. member is saying.

The hon. member for Joliette.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Richmond—Arthabaska for his comment and his question.

When my other colleague wonders if it was not a bit rich, well, that is huge. That is why the motion passed unanimously in the Quebec National Assembly. It was supported by all parties, by the Premier of Quebec, and by the Minister of Justice.

Last time, this matter wound up before the Supreme Court, which ruled that Quebec had the right to keep its Consumer Protection Act.

The Bank Act is a federal act, but the Consumer Protection Act must remain in Quebec.

This is a mammoth bill with over 200 clauses. The Liberals tried to pull a fast one on the people of Quebec. All parties of the Quebec National Assembly, along with all opposition parties here, are coming together to pressure the federal government to not go there. It needs to stop standing up for the banks rather than consumers and start thinking of the people, defending the people and consumers against the banks, which are going too far.

• (1050)

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, so many questions and so few answers. I cannot say that I have many answers in the comments I will be making in the next few minutes, but I find it extremely disappointing that the government is so far from being able to meet the expectations that it created and made Canadians believe in, based on its claims during the election campaign.

We are currently looking at Bill C-29, which seeks to implement some of the budget's recommendations. The government is touting it as the bill that will implement the measures proposed to help the middle class, which has never been defined.

From what I can see in the various statistics on income, when we talk about the middle-class tax cuts, this means raising taxes on about 1% of taxpayers and redistributing that money to 9% of the population, while completely disregarding 89% of the people. The same goes for the Canada child benefit. The government says it is a program that will benefit everyone and so many more people than before. However, it is not being indexed for four years, which means that it will amount to roughly the same as we had before. That is a problem.

What was not said during the election campaign is also problematic. I am going to go back to the issue of infrastructure because it is a prime example of the government's lack of honesty on economic issues.

Yes, the government did mention an infrastructure bank during the election campaign, but it did not say how it would work. I can say that mayors and elected officials in our ridings understood that there would be an infrastructure bank where money would be placed, and that the money would be lent at low rates to help the Liberals fulfill their promises. That is exactly what the Liberal candidates said during the 2015 campaign. Now we find ourselves with a monstrosity into which they will inject \$15 billion, which was the amount promised for communities and the funding they could apply for. This money is being put in an infrastructure bank to try to attract private capital. The private capital will make up about 80% of the total capital.

Government Orders

The government is trying to make us believe that that is what it promised from the beginning, that is what Canadians were promised, and that is how it will be able to finance the entire infrastructure deficit. We are going to find ourselves with an infrastructure bank of about \$200 billion dollars in capital that is 80% controlled by the private sector.

I do not know whether the government is just naive or whether it sincerely believes that it will still have the power to decide where that money goes, even though it is investing only 20% of the capital and getting the other 80% from the private sector.

There is a sort of contradiction here. Yes, programs have been proposed by the government. The government is talking about green infrastructure, transit infrastructure, and social infrastructure, which has never really been defined. The government has promised to invest \$80 billion over the next 10 years. In addition, the Minister of Finance feels it is extremely urgent that the infrastructure bank be put in place by next year. The infrastructure deficit really needs to be addressed next year.

We understand that the infrastructure deficit is an urgent matter. We, too, have been talking to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. However, if it is so urgent to have the infrastructure bank to begin to invest, why are two-thirds of the new investments announced in the government's economic update not going to be applied until 2021, 2022, or 2023? That is two elections from now.

Two-thirds of the promised amounts will not be invested until then. Only one-third will be invested before 2021, but it is extremely urgent to invest now and create the infrastructure bank.

During the election campaign, the Liberals never mentioned to Canadians that their plan might include tolls and user fees. It seems to me like that is more of a given at this point. That was never mentioned. The only time the Liberals spoke about tolls was when they said that there would be no toll on the Champlain Bridge. They never said that there would be tolls on all the other bridges. Obviously, tolls are the only way the private sector would be able to make a return on its investment in the infrastructure bank. Returns on investments do not fall from the sky. That money is not going to come for free. In order to see a return, the government will impose loans on Canadians, who will also have to help pay for this infrastructure with their tax dollars.

• (1055)

Do they seriously expect anyone to believe that the infrastructure issue is going to be sorted out? Almost half of the government's plan is tied to the private sector, but they seem to think that they will be able to decide which projects go forward and where that private sector money will end up.

What we heard from Michael Sabia is that the private sector wants to see a 7% to 9% return. We have also heard from various investors that they would be unlikely to invest in projects worth less than \$100 million. Some have even said they would probably not invest in projects worth less than \$500 million.

There are no \$100-million projects in my riding, but I do know of one such project: highway 20. Does anyone really think that investors from Bay Street, Wall Street, and even China and Australia, who were at that BlackRock meeting, would be interested

in setting up a toll booth on highway 20 in Rimouski when they can invest that money in Montreal, Toronto, or Vancouver, where the returns, usage, and density are bound to be higher?

What the government is doing right now is presenting a facade of sorts to Canadians, saying that it is going to solve the problem and that it is doing what the Liberals promised during the election campaign. None of this was promised.

The Liberals definitely promised to resolve the infrastructure problem and invest money. Yes, funding has been allocated. We cannot disagree with them when they talk about funding for public transit and green infrastructure, because we made similar promises. Obviously, they never mentioned the private sector's role. They never mentioned that 80% of this infrastructure bank's capital would be funded by the private sector, nor did they ever mention that they would work not just with pension funds, but also with private funds, even international ones. They never promised that they would consider privatizing our airports and ports.

The Canadian government asked Credit Suisse to do a study on whether it should privatize eight Canadian airports. It asked Morgan Stanley whether it should privatize 18 Canadian ports, the 18 port authorities. Where was that in the Liberal election platform?

We are being advised by two investment firms less than 10 years after the debacle on Wall Street and the financial crisis. At least one of the two firms implicated in this debacle is now going to advise us on whether we should privatize the ports that it may decide to invest in. Some might recall that Morgan Stanley has already held shares in the Port of Montreal.

Is there not a single Liberal willing to acknowledge the possibility that it may be an apparent conflict of interest to ask investment firms that might benefit directly to advise the government on privatizing key infrastructure in Canada's economy without having spoken a single word about all this during the election campaign? This is not a minor decision. We would be radically altering the course of the Canadian economy. We are being asked to simply close our eyes and let it happen.

I do not see a big difference between the Liberal government and the previous Conservative government. At least the Conservatives were clear. They wanted to go in this direction and they said so. We did not agree with them, but they were honest about it. The Liberals say that they are really all about the common good and are committed to helping the middle class. However, they are secretly dealing with Wall Street and Bay Street in order to reserve shares for them in Canadian infrastructure. They never mentioned it before. They are going to do business with them so they can hand them over key infrastructure such as airports and ports.

We are not going to sound the alarm when it is announced in the media and the decision has been made. Our path is clear. One only has to scan the media to see that the government asked Crédit Suisse and Morgan Stanley to make recommendations about privatization.

It is clear to me that the Liberals are not even telling us half the story with respect to their economic agenda, especially as it pertains to infrastructure investments.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member will have five minutes after question period.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[Translation]

FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, everyone knows that the banks are in business with the minister of high finance. The Liberals are not doing anything about tax havens and tax avoidance because it might upset their good friends on Bay Street.

Would using the Canada-wide securities commission to weaken the financial markets' authority make the cigar-smoking friends of the establishment happy? No problem. The minister of high finance will arrange that, and if the banks want to be exempt from the Quebec Consumer Protection Act because they do not like being accountable to ordinary Canadians, then the minister of high finance will arrange that too.

Not everyone can afford to pay \$1,500 to attend a cocktail party to meet the Prime Minister or his minister of high finance. At some point, the government will have to stop looking after the interests of its banking friends and start working for ordinary Canadians.

* * *

• (1100)

SHAWINIGAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us talk about ordinary Canadians.

I am pleased to congratulate the Shawinigan chamber of commerce and industry, which was presented with the Fédération des chambres de commerce du Québec's economic development award on November 23. The federation is made up of over 140 chambers of commerce.

I would like to recognize the work of the whole team at the Shawinigan chamber of commerce and industry and the involvement of more than 600 business people in Shawinigan and surrounding areas.

As a resident of Shawinigan, which was once known as the electricity capital of the world, I know how much this honour also highlights the major economic restructuring the city has undergone as a result of the many challenges associated with the end of the industrial era.

Thanks to community stakeholders, such as the chamber of commerce, I am proud today to tell Canadians that Shawinigan is becoming a leader once more, particularly when it comes to entrepreneurship and the digital sector, resolutely forward-looking sectors.

Statements by Members

Three cheers for the Mauricie.

* * *

[English]

CANADIAN LEGION

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, every year, the Royal Canadian Legion conducts the poppy campaign to raise funds for veterans and their families, and most Canadians give generously. However, it is disappointing to know that there are those who disregard what the poppy stands for and our veterans by stealing poppy boxes.

I rise today to recognize an important initiative in my riding. In response to some thefts last year, Dan Kroffat from Cochrane designed a new anti-theft poppy box. Fifty prototypes were created with support from the Cochrane legion, the Cochrane & District Chamber of Commerce, Alex Baum of Cochrane Toyota, Garney Baker of EGB Manufacturing, and Jon Cornish, retired Calgary Stampeders star.

These new boxes were placed in high-traffic areas as they garner more donations and are more at risk of theft. I am pleased to say that the donations collected in Cochrane this year have surpassed last year's record totals. When donors felt the funds were safe, they contributed more.

Congratulations on a job well done. I hope to see this initiative rolled out nationally next year.

* * *

[Translation]

HOLLY RICHARD AND CHRISTOPHER BOLLAND

Mrs. Celina Caesar-Chavannes (Whitby, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I am pleased to congratulate two residents of my riding, Whitby, whose contributions were recently recognized by the Governor General.

[English]

Holly Richard, a teacher at Brooklin High School, was awarded the Governor General's History Award for excellence in teaching. She was recognized for her outstanding work in educating and engaging her students on the history, culture, and challenges of the indigenous people in Canada.

Whitby police officer, Constable Christopher Bolland, received the Medal of Bravery from the Governor General for the selfless actions he took to rescue a driver engulfed in flames.

[Translation]

Ms. Richard and Constable Bolland are wonderful ambassadors of our community, and their achievements help make Whitby a better community. I congratulate them both.

* * *

[English]

JUMBO GLACIER

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): *Ki'suk kyukyit*, Mr. Speaker.

Statements by Members

At the centre of the majestic Purcell Mountains in my riding of Kootenay—Columbia is Qat'muk, the Jumbo Valley birthplace of the grizzly bear's spirit and the traditional land of the Ktunaxa First Nation. This area is also part of an ecologically significant wildlife corridor and the site of the proposed Jumbo Glacier ski resort.

For nearly 25 years, thousands of Kootenay—Columbia residents have been battling alongside the Ktunaxa Nation to preserve Qat'muk and to keep Jumbo wild. That fight came to Ottawa this week, with the help of Wildsight and Patagonia, in the screening of the documentary film *Jumbo Wild* at the Museum of Nature, and by the Ktunaxa's challenge in the Supreme Court of Canada to have their aboriginal spiritual practices and beliefs legally recognized.

Today I would like to celebrate in the House the efforts of the Ktunaxa and all of the residents of Kootenay—Columbia who fight to preserve our wild and spiritual spaces. Their efforts are very much appreciated.

* * *

• (1105)

ACTION CANADA

Mr. Terry Beech (Burnaby North—Seymour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a great privilege to rise today and acknowledge the achievements of the Hon. Justice Malcolm Rowe and our shared experience with the Action Canada program.

If founding CEO Cathy Beehan were in the House today, she would tell us that Action Canada is a year long fellowship program that has had a monumental impact on our country since its founding in 2002.

I was a fellow in 2010, and at the time was assigned two remarkable advisers. The first was Bob Foulkes, a man who helped get me back into political service. The second was Malcolm Rowe, who recently became the first Supreme Court justice to hail from Newfoundland and Labrador. His contribution to both Canada and Action Canada has not only shaped who he is as a person, but also who we are as a nation.

Justice Rowe will be officially welcomed to the court in a ceremony this afternoon. I invite everyone to join me in congratulating him on his appointment to the Supreme Court of Canada.

* * *

[*Translation*]

HOLIDAY SEASON

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, every December, excitement sets in as the holidays approach. Christmas decorations appear, and people plan parties and shop for gifts.

However, there are some people, such as those who have lost their jobs, who live in poverty, or who are alone, who experience a lot of anxiety around this time of year. Today I would like to salute all of the men and women who are involved in helping these people so they too can have the joyful and restful holiday season they deserve.

In my riding and all across Canada, many individuals and organizations distribute Christmas hampers and organize fundraisers and parties for the least fortunate. I will not name them all. They know who they are, and on behalf of my colleagues here in the House, I want to thank them from the bottom of my heart.

I want to thank all the generous elves who put in countless hours to share a little happiness with all of those people during the holidays.

* * *

[*English*]

SANTA'S ANGELS

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, amid the excitement and anticipation of the Christmas season, there are some very kind souls who lift the spirits of those who are less fortunate.

Today I wish to recognize Father Stephen Allen, Kenny Zakem, Don Wright, and their team of volunteers. Twelve years ago they founded Santa's Angels in Charlottetown, a dedicated group that works tirelessly each Christmas to deliver food and gifts, along with a visit from Santa, to those in need.

Last Christmas, 77 of Santa's Angels visited 218 homes, helping an estimated 1,000 adults and children. These volunteers take time out of their own Christmas morning, with Santa's visits beginning as early as 7 a.m., to create a magical and memorable surprise for those who may not have been able to have a Christmas celebration on their own.

I know I speak for the entire House when send out a sincere "thank you" to Santa's Angels and all of the other local charities that spread joy to our most vulnerable citizens.

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[*Translation*]

HOLIDAY SEASON IN HULL—AYLMER

Mr. Greg Fergus (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow evening it will be my great pleasure to take part in the annual Santa Claus parade in Old Aylmer. This time I will be joined by 50 young people who are part of the Hull-Aylmer youth council.

[*English*]

This annual event has served both as a celebration of the holiday season as well as a time to recognize community organizations in the Outaouais. Thirty thousand people attend this festive parade each year.

[*Translation*]

This Sunday, throughout the Outaouais, teams of volunteers will be criss-crossing our neighbourhoods collecting donations. Hundreds of volunteers will be out ensuring that our community is filled with the joys of Christmas. Please, Hull-Aylmer, give generously.

I invite all my hon. colleagues of the House to join me tomorrow evening or Sunday morning to mark the holiday season in Hull—Aylmer.

Statements by Members

[English]

HEALTH

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was disappointed to see that the Liberals have chosen to attack policies that are in fact working for Canadians.

Saskatchewan is being targeted by the Liberals for implementing legislation that is helping to lower wait times for MRIs. Threatening Saskatchewan's funding for offering a solution that allows for speedier MRIs at no extra cost to the people of Saskatchewan is irresponsible. This policy does not cost taxpayers anything, while the Liberals continue to raise taxes on families, hard-working Canadians, businesses, and now even doctors.

The Liberals need to stop threatening provinces, stop spending money on programs that are not benefiting Canadians, and stop raising taxes. The government needs to get its priorities straight and start working for all Canadians.

Wait times for detox treatment are at an all-time high and Canadians are dying every day, yet this is still not a priority for the Liberal government.

The minister needs to work with the provinces, territories, and doctors to improve wait times and health care instead of picking fights with those who provide services and those who pay for them.

* * *

• (1110)

SEVA FOOD BANK

Mr. Omar Alghabra (Mississauga Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Seva Food Bank is a local Mississauga organization that was borne out of Sikhs serving Canada in 2010. Since then, Seva has been serving over 700 families a month.

Last November, Seva Food Bank came together with the producers of CJMR 1320 AM radio station to mark the birthday of Guru Nanak and hold their sixth annual radiothon and food drive. The Prime Minister chimed in with a message to support this great initiative.

I am happy to report that the drive was a tremendous success, raising over \$115,000 in pledges and 22,000 pounds of food.

I want to congratulate the 200 volunteers, radio producers, over 20 South Asian grocery stores and gurdwaras that participated in this remarkable drive. Their efforts will make a difference in the lives of fellow neighbours.

I also want to thank the staff and board members of Seva. This is the type of organization I hope to see out of business soon, but, until then, the community is immensely grateful for all that it does.

* * *

BOYS CLUB NETWORK

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this week on Parliament Hill, the Boys Club Network, through its heart-wrenching play “Man Up”, invited parliamentarians to recognize that in Canada we are

losing our boys. We are losing our boys because far too many lack positive role models and, as such, a sense of belonging.

The brainchild of Walter Mustapich and Jim Crescenzo, together with Laura Neubert, the Boys Club Network has touched 22,000 boys, boys at risk, boys who may have committed a crime, boys who been in jail, boys who otherwise would have cost the taxpayer millions of dollars and, yet, have grown into fine young men.

As parliamentarians, it is our job to advocate for all. When we support our boys, we support the ability of men to stand strong on their own and our society to stand strong together.

I am proud to be in this boy's club, and I invite each and every member to look into the Boys Club Network in his or her community for the boys and for the men they will become.

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INTERPROVINCIAL TRADE

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians have a constitutional right to trade with fellow Canadians. One only needs to look at section 121 of the Constitution Act, which states, “All Articles of the Growth, Produce, or Manufacture of any one of the Provinces shall, from and after the Union, be admitted free into each of the other Provinces”. It is a rather simple but powerful statement that the Fathers of Confederation sought to make Canada not just a political union but an economic one.

A court decision in 1921 narrowed its application and ever since, Canadians have suffered ever-increasing barriers to trade. This week, the province of New Brunswick announced it would be seeking to leave to the Supreme Court of Canada to hear the case of Mr. Comeau. In its statement, the Government of New Brunswick said, “The implications of this decision are far greater than simply addressing the purchase of alcohol. It concerns issues of inter-provincial trade with significant consequences”.

I applaud this decision by the province of New Brunswick as the Supreme Court is best situated to hear, study, and rule on such an important constitutional issue. It is my hope that the Government of Canada will support this decision by the province of New Brunswick and support this important constitutional right.

* * *

ST. FRANCIS XAVIER UNIVERSITY

Mr. Sean Fraser (Central Nova, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow at my alma mater, St. Francis Xavier University in Antigonish, Nova Scotia, 1,000 students will be initiated into Atlantic Canada's own fellowship of the ring. Like Gollum, they are waiting to get their hands on their precious to signify the completion of their undergrad career and to celebrate the Xaverian community.

Oral Questions

When the member for St. John's South—Mount Pearl, from *Canada AM*, spoke at my X-ring ceremony a decade ago, I was inspired by the infinite wisdom he imbued on the developing minds before him. It seems as though the X-ring has become a bit of an “X-press” pass to Parliament when I see the chamber hosts no less than eight rings, including that of our beloved Speaker of the House.

However, my career has yet to be as distinguished as many other alumni, who include former prime minister Brian Mulroney, former deputy prime minister and foreign minister Allan J. MacEachen, former premier of New Brunswick and U.S. ambassador Frank McKenna, novelist Alistair MacLeod, and Celtic musician John Allan Cameron. The thread that binds these exceptional folks together is none other than St. FX. A proud alumnus, I am excited for 1,000 more ring-bearers to be welcomed into the fellowship tomorrow.

I congratulate the class of 2017. Go X Go.

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[Translation]

LE DÉTOUR CHEESE FACTORY

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the 29th annual World Cheese Awards just wrapped up in San Sebastian, Spain. This is a major competition in the world of cheese making. Around 3,000 cheeses made their way from 31 countries and were judged by over 260 discerning experts.

Despite this intense competition, Le Détour cheese factory from Témiscouata-sur-le-Lac managed to win second place in the mixed milk cheese category for its Verdict d'Alexina cheese.

This will come as no surprise to those who are familiar with Le Détour cheese factory. Many of its cheeses have won awards and can be found abroad. Verdict d'Alexina and Magie de Madawaska are now being marketed in the United Arab Emirates, and the excellent, multi-award-winning Grey Owl can also be found in restaurants in the Byward Market here in Ottawa.

Congratulations to Ginette Bégin and Mario Quirion, the co-owners of Le Détour cheese factory, as well as their entire team. You are a treasure to Témiscouata, the Lower St. Lawrence, and the entire Acadie des Terres et Forêts region.

* * *

•(1115)

[English]

JUSTICE

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the Cariboo, we say what we mean and we mean what we say. We expect that if someone says something, they better be prepared to back it up.

I rise today to share with the House an email from one of my constituents. Mr. Clark wrote, “As a father of three girls, one of whom was sexually assaulted, I was first saddened, then angry with the fact that our Prime Minister felt one month was a good sentence for a 50-year-old man that sexually assaulted a 15-year-old girl. How can a man that promotes women's equality allow this to happen?”

How can a leader that should be protecting children and young women allow this happen? His answer was disgraceful, and for the first time in my life, I was ashamed to be a Canadian and of our laws.”

When an Ontario court struck down the mandatory minimum sentence of a 50-year-old man who sexually assaulted the 15-year-old, the Prime Minister cowardly and spinelessly refused to stand up for the victim. This is unacceptable. This is shameful.

I challenge the Prime Minister to call Mr. Clark's daughter and explain himself. I will set up the call.

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CHRISTKINDL MARKET IN KITCHENER

Mr. Raj Saini (Kitchener Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the award-winning Christkindl Market in Kitchener.

This market is based on the centuries-old German tradition of Christmas markets, a tradition which dates back to 1310. Christkindl Market showcases our local craftspeople and artists, and acts as an opportunity for our community to come together in celebration of the season. There is something for everyone to enjoy, from live music and shopping, to a parade and freshly prepared food.

We thank the organizers, sponsors, officials, and volunteers who have once again come together to put on a world-class event. The market runs until Sunday evening, and I would like to invite all my colleagues, and indeed all Canadians, to come to Kitchener this weekend to experience our Christkindl Market in person.

Fröhliche Weihnachten

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

ETHICS

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, another day and yet another secret cash for access fundraiser with the Prime Minister and his billionaire friends. We have now learned that just weeks ago, the Prime Minister wined and dined over 80 well-connected, wealthy individuals who would stand to do very well if more Chinese investment comes to Canada. These insiders paid \$1,500 each to tell the Prime Minister precisely what it was that they needed to make even more money. Guess what, the Prime Minister listened to their wish list.

Will the Liberals release the names of who was at this fundraiser, and exactly which government files did the Prime Minister discuss?

*Oral Questions***Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):**

Mr. Speaker, allow me to be very clear. We have some of the strictest rules around fundraising of any level of government, and our party respects those rules. The Chief Electoral Officer stated that Canada's political finance laws are "the most advanced and constrained and transparent" in the world. In regard to ticketed fundraising events, he confirmed that every party in every campaign does them.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is clear that the Liberals do not want to answer the question, so let me help them. This fundraiser was hosted by a B.C. developer who admitted that he lobbied the Prime Minister to make it easier for rich investors from China to come to Canada, a stunning admission that the Prime Minister is discussing government business at these Liberal cash-for-access fundraisers. It seems that the Prime Minister is being bought.

What is the Prime Minister waiting for in order to stop these unethical cash-for-access fundraisers, a knock on the door from the RCMP?

• (1120)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):

Mr. Speaker, the member opposite and Canadians have nothing to fear. We are operating within the rules. It is important that we recognize that we have the strictest rules around fundraising of any level of government and our party respects those rules.

In regard to ticketed fundraising events, the Chief Electoral Officer confirmed that every party, including the Conservative Party, in every campaign, has the same sorts of events.

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EMPLOYMENT

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government is failing Canadians more and more each and every day, whether it is these unethical cash for access fundraisers, whether it is insulting Canadians on electoral reform, or when it is on the economic policy. Today's job numbers are out, and they are devastating. Still not one new full-time job created and more full-time jobs lost. When will the Liberals take a hard look in the mirror, press the reset button, and start doing something in the interests of Canadians instead of their own interests?

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would remind the hon. member that we have taken bold action to strengthen the economy through historic infrastructure investments and support for families. This is the right time to invest and stimulate growth for the middle class. I would remind the hon. member that employment in the last month increased by 10,700, over 180,000 jobs in the last year. The unemployment rate has also decreased to 6.8%, good news for our economy. Be assured that our government's plan is to put people first and ensure that Canadians have access to the good, well-paying jobs of tomorrow.

[Translation]

TAXATION

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the only way the Liberals have been able to create any wealth in Canada is by taxing Canadians. As everyone knows, that does not work. Taxes do not make people richer; they make them poorer.

Yesterday the media was even reporting that the Liberals' tax measures could cause thousands of doctors to head south of the border.

The Minister of Finance is attacking our health care system, which is extremely troubling. When will he stop dipping into the pockets of Canadian taxpayers?

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is such a pleasure to answer my colleague's question.

This is the government that has cut taxes for the middle class. I would remind Canadians who are watching us that the opposition, the Conservatives, voted against that.

To come back to my colleague's question about doctors, we have been very clear. This government was elected on the basis of tax fairness. Everyone must pay their fair share, whether they are lawyers, accountants, or doctors. As we have said, there will be a tax deduction for every small business that is created; one company, one deduction. Canadians understand that. That is exactly what we are doing for the middle class.

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am curious to see whether the member will give us the same old lines he has been using since the beginning of the year, when we presented him with statistics that were just released this morning.

The Liberals' record for their first year in office is 30,000 fewer full-time jobs than when they came to power. This government was unable to create a single full-time job this past year. The Liberals' plan to run up tens of billions of dollars in debt on the backs of our children and grandchildren and to tax, tax, tax is not working. The minister is about to hit a wall.

When will the minister finally listen to Canadians and give taxpayers a break?

[English]

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member will agree, Canada needs to make smart decisions and sound investments today to ensure that Canadians have access to good, well-paying jobs tomorrow. We are moving ahead with making those necessary investments that will grow our economy.

Oral Questions

As the hon. parliamentary secretary has said many times in the House, we have lowered taxes for nine million Canadians. We introduced the Canadian child benefit; nine out of ten families will benefit. We have improved employment insurance. We are increasing our investments in skills and training. Make no mistake, our government is focused on its plan to strengthen the middle class and improve growth to help the Canadian economy.

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DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let us do a recap. The Liberals were elected promising to change the voting system. The Prime Minister repeated the promise in his victory speech on election night, and as recently as two days ago.

The Liberal government put together a process that included asking the committee to study “viable alternative voting systems”. The committee did this and proposed a path toward proportional representation, but instead of moving forward on its commitment, the Liberal government responded with insults. Our question is, why?

• (1125)

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a great privilege to be here on this Algonquin territory with my colleagues.

I would like to take a moment to address something. Yesterday in the House, I used words that I deeply regret.

If you will allow me, Mr. Speaker, I would like to sincerely apologize to the members of the House, to Canadians, and to the members of the all-party Special Committee on Electoral Reform. In no way did I intend to imply that they did not work hard, that they did not put in the long hours, or that they did not focus on the task at hand. I thank them for their work.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that does not answer the basic question because the Liberals promised that the 2015 election would be the last under the existing system.

We know that some of the Prime Minister's promises were just a lot of hot air, but not this one. It was clear and precise. The committee spent \$1 million to hear what Canadians and experts across the country had to say. Unfortunately, yesterday, the government directly attacked the committee.

Why is the government disparaging and insulting the committee and the hard work being done by its members, including Liberal MPs?

[English]

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, allow me to take this opportunity to apologize again for the words I used yesterday. I thank all members of the House for their hard work, especially the members of the special all-party committee, and I encourage all members to read the report.

*[Translation]***PUBLIC SAFETY**

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would focus on another irresponsible remark. Yesterday, the Minister of Natural Resources suggested that the government would have police and armed forces crack down on people protesting against the Kinder Morgan pipeline. Instead of having a constructive nation-to-nation relationship with indigenous communities, the minister threatened to deploy state forces. That is shameful.

How can the government defend the minister and his irresponsible and even dangerous comments?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we all know, the right to protest is part of our Canadian democracy. We respect that.

The right to lawful protest was part of our platform last year. We know that many Canadians feel strongly about certain issues and they have the right to protest. We are certain that these Canadians will exercise that right in compliance with the law.

[English]

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Natural Resources still suggested that the Liberal government is prepared to use police and defence forces to counter protests against the Kinder Morgan pipeline. What reckless, irresponsible, and incendiary language from the minister, and only two days since they approved this pipeline.

My question is for the Minister of Defence. Will he remind his colleague, the Minister of Natural Resources, that if he is truly concerned about the rule of law, he should know that in this country the federal government has no such authority to use our military against pipeline protests.

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, of course, one of the cornerstones of our Canadian democracy that we are very proud of is the right to protest peacefully. In fact, as I mentioned, we had this specifically in our platform in the election last year.

We will always respect the right of Canadians to protest when they do not agree with something. They have the right to do it, they feel strongly about it, and we are confident that they will do so peacefully.

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DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the special committee on electoral reform conducted an online survey that received over 20,000 responses. It asked specific questions about what Canadians want in their voting system. Next week, the minister launches the mydemocracy.ca website, asking questions about values relating to electoral reform that are so vague they read like a Myers & Briggs personality test.

Oral Questions

Instead of asking about people's feelings, the government could use the committee's questions. Indeed, the committee has asked the government to do so.

The site has not gone live. The minister could respond positively to this question: Will she change the survey?

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will respond positively to this question by offering my sincere apologies to the member for my comments yesterday.

We are looking forward to connecting with as many Canadians as possible through a new online and telephone initiative, which will ensure that we hear from as many Canadians as possible before we present the House with our recommendations on electoral reform.

• (1130)

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on the one hand, the minister says that the special committee was irresponsible and did not do its work, because it did not provide a specific response. Then the minister says that she is going to refuse to ask specific questions. I think everyone can see the obvious, outrageous double standard at work here.

Here is the double standard the Liberals have. The minister talks about the disenfranchised, those who cannot participate in the process, and says that she is reaching out to them. All they have to do is take their iPhone and respond to her online survey. I mean, the rampant, outrageous hypocrisy is just unbelievable.

There are some specific questions that the committee requested that she ask. Will she do so?

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for another opportunity to talk about the new digital initiative we will be launching next week.

The member is right that as of next week, mydemocracy.ca will allow Canadians to have a conversation about their democracy. Something that the special committee's report did highlight was the importance of engaging Canadians further, and a recognition that while there is no perfect electoral system, the conversation with Canadians needs to take place through a values-based approach. That is exactly what we are doing, and we are looking forward to hearing from as many Canadians as possible before we present our recommendations to the House.

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Democratic Institutions insulted the thousands of Canadians who participated in the work of the committee on electoral reform when she questioned the committee's work by saying, "We asked the committee to help answer very difficult questions for us. It did not do that." Or is it simply that the committee did not answer the way she wanted it to?

We appreciate the apology, but if the minister really wants to make this right, will she take the committee's recommendation seriously and offer a referendum?

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for accepting my apology. I certainly feel better. However, I also recognize how passionate the member opposite is about a referendum.

I encourage all members of the House to read the report. I encourage all Canadians to go online beginning next week and become engaged and empowered about their democracy.

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, not only do the vast majority of Canadians expect a referendum, but according to a recent poll, it turns out that even 74% of Liberal supporters want one too. Instead, the government is talking about a postcard and a website.

Let us be clear. There is no other form of citizen engagement that can replace a referendum, certainly not a postcard, or a website, or telephone calls. If the minister is actually serious about listening to each and every Canadian, and actually serious about the apology she has made, will she commit to taking the recommendation seriously and offer Canadians a referendum?

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said yesterday in the House, there are concrete recommendations in the report the committee presented to us, like the need for greater engagement of all Canadians in the conversation on electoral reform.

This past summer, members of the House held conversations in their ridings. My parliamentary secretary and I travelled the country, as did the committee on electoral reform. Next week, we will launch an online initiative that Canadians can also access through the telephone. We would like to hear their thoughts on the values they would like at the heart of their democracy.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the best way to feel better is to ask Canadians where they stand on electoral reform, and it is called a referendum.

[*Translation*]

In a democratic society, we are not afraid to engage with the people. In a democratic society, we are not afraid to hear what people think. In a democratic society, when we are entirely confident in our position, we know we can count on the trust of Canadians.

Why is the government refusing to ask Canadians what they think? Why is the government refusing to hold a referendum on electoral reform?

[*English*]

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite and I agree. We need to hear from as many Canadians as possible before we move forward on legislation on electoral reform. That is exactly what we will do.

Starting next week, Canadians will have an opportunity not just to have a say, but to learn more about their democracy. We want to hear from them, the values they would like shaping their electoral system, and we are looking forward to hearing from as many Canadians as possible before we introduce legislation in the House.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, just because the minister does not agree with the report's findings does not mean that she must set it aside.

Oral Questions

Thousands of Canadians across the country participated in these consultations. The Conservative Party touched base with 80,000 people. People wrote to us that the government must hold a referendum, and 80% of the people said that a referendum was required. The best way to move forward with sound electoral reform is to ask for Canadians to express their opinions.

Will the government do what Canadians want, act in their best interests, and hold a referendum, yes or no?

• (1135)

[English]

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank members of the House who hosted town halls in their ridings and my parliamentary secretary for his continued work on this effort. I would like to thank the members of the special committee who have travelled far and wide, and the Canadians who have taken part.

There are 15 million households in this country that will receive an invitation in the mail starting next week. Some have already begun, inviting them to be part of this conversation, so that before we make any final recommendations on electoral reform, we have ensured that we have heard from as many Canadians as possible.

We will do that, and we are looking forward to doing something that has not been done before.

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PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government promised to fix the Phoenix pay system by October 31, but over a month later, people in my riding of Essex are still going without a paycheque. People are afraid that missed paycheques will lead to missed mortgage payments, which will cause people to lose their homes.

Phoenix has been a train wreck, a national disgrace, causing undue stress and anxiety for tens of thousands of Canadians. When will the government finally fix this shameful mess?

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is no question that the ongoing pay problems are unacceptable, and our sole focus is on doing what we need to do to ensure that the people who have earned their salaries get every dollar of them.

We are working hard. We continue to do so. We have put a number of measures in place. Phoenix is our priority and that is what we will do.

* * *

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this morning's job numbers confirm that the Liberal's economic plan is going nowhere.

The economy is getting shakier and shakier. We lost 8,700 more full-time jobs last month. Thirty thousand jobs have been lost since the Liberals took power.

The manufacturing sector shed 12,000 jobs last month, for a total of 50,000 under the Liberals.

Youth aged 15 to 24 saw 40,000 full-time jobs vanish last month alone.

Will the Minister of Finance stop telling Canadians that they need to get used to the new normal and actually do something?

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the opportunity to remind members that this government's measures have resulted in the creation of more than 140,000 jobs in this country over the past 12 months. That is because Canadians made a choice on October 19, a choice that enabled them to invest in the middle class, to invest in Canadians, and to invest in infrastructure.

I would like to remind my colleagues that Canadians know Canada's plan is a good one and so does the rest of the world. Even Ms. Lagarde, managing director of the International Monetary Fund, said that she hopes the Canadian plan will go viral around the world. Our plan is a plan for Canadians, a plan to create jobs here.

* * *

[English]

ETHICS

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the unsavoury facts of the Liberal cash for access fundraisers continue to evolve.

A B.C. developer paid \$1,500 to attend the Prime Minister's fundraiser, and even admits that he lobbied the Prime Minister to make it easier for wealthy investors from China to come to Canada.

This is in direct violation of the conflict of interest policy, which says that we are to avoid potentially inappropriate lobbying. Will the Prime Minister finally put an end to these cash for access fundraisers?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think it is important that we recognize that only Canadians can actually donate.

We have some of the strictest rules around fundraising of any level of government, and our party respects those rules. I will repeat that the Chief Electoral Officer has stated that Canada's political financing laws are the "most advanced and constrained and transparent" in the world.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is no answer at all.

The evidence shows that the Prime Minister is being lobbied by Chinese communists looking to invest in Canada, at \$1,500 a plate cash for access fundraisers.

Now we learn that the Minister of Natural Resources is planning to sell Canadian oil sands operations to communist state-owned companies.

Oral Questions

Why is the Prime Minister willing to sell out Canada to the Chinese to raise money for the Liberals, and when will he put an end to these cash for access fundraisers?

• (1140)

Mr. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has a balanced approach of openness to ideas, people, and investments, while making sure that decisions about foreign investments are taken in Canada's interests.

The Investment Canada Act provides for a review of significant foreign investments in this country, and the act also provides for a review of all foreign investments into Canada to protect national security. These rules are in place. The hon. member knows this, and her colleagues know this very clearly.

We want to make sure that Canada is open for business in the right and appropriate manner.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, to make it very clear, only Canadians can actually donate to political parties.

As I have said on numerous occasions, we have some of the strictest rules around fundraising of any level of government, and our party respects those rules. Again I will quote the Chief Electoral Officer, who says that our political financing laws are the “most advanced and constrained and transparent” in the world.

[Translation]

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

The government is taking Canadians for fools. The Prime Minister issued clear rules to maintain the integrity of his cabinet. He said:

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

Does the Prime Minister take his job seriously? Does he know how to read? Does he understand the things he says? Can he show some respect for the people of Canada?

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, not only can I read, but I also understand.

I would again emphasize that in Canada we have some of the strictest rules around fundraising of any level of government, and our party respects those rules.

I am going to quote the Chief Electoral Officer once again in regard to Canada's political financing laws, who says they are the “most advanced and constrained and transparent” in the world.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Columbia River Treaty is nearing the end of its 60-year term, and needs to be brought up to date with 21st century needs and to ensure that Canada is receiving the benefit it deserves.

A renegotiated treaty would better address the protection of the river's ecosystem; issues around climate change; and first nations' rights, which are completely ignored in the current treaty.

When will the government truly begin renegotiation talks, and will it ensure that local voices are heard at the table?

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Columbia River Treaty is something that Canadians are very proud of, as well as Americans.

We are looking forward to those discussions with our American neighbours and, of course, looking forward to collaborating at the national level, internationally, and also with first nations and local communities.

As a British Columbian, I have worked quite closely even with local mayors to ensure that we come up with a treaty in the best interests of all Canadians.

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INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is pretty clear the Liberals only want consensus when it suits them. The Prime Minister did not seek consensus before approving the Kinder Morgan pipeline.

Snuneymuxw first nation in my riding of Nanaimo—Ladysmith feels betrayed. Former Chief Kwul'a'sul'tun said, “this project puts at risk our way of life.” He also said the decision was “premised on a denial of aboriginal peoples rights and voice”.

Why has the Prime Minister betrayed first nations and our coast? Where is their need for consensus now?

• (1145)

Ms. Kim Rudd (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unlike the previous government that had a history of failing to engage with our indigenous communities, our government is committed to a nation-to-nation relationship.

The fact is, indigenous communities signed benefit agreements worth over \$300 million on this project and we are providing more than \$64 million for an indigenous advisory and monitoring committee to oversee operations. We are also establishing an economic pathways partnership, creating training and job opportunities for indigenous groups.

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SCIENCE

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this government understands that investments in science can help us attract and retain some of the best talent in order to continue our proud tradition of research excellence in Canada.

Oral Questions

This morning the Minister of Science announced the latest results of the Canada research chairs competition. Can the Parliamentary Secretary for Science update the House on what the government is doing to support Canadian researchers?

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary for Science, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to research excellence, science-based decision-making, and delivering results for Canadians.

Today, the minister announced an investment of \$164 million for 203 world-class Canada research chairs at 48 universities. Their research will lead to advancements in health care, engineering, and the environment while growing the middle class.

I am pleased to share with the member for Laurentides—Labelle that this new cohort of Canada research chairs will include one of the largest proportions of female researchers since the program began.

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ETHICS

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday when asked about the marijuana task force report the justice minister categorically stated, “The report was not available.... There is no evidence that this report has been leaked.” That is nonsense, because the evidence is mounting.

On November 16, Liberal-connected pot stocks skyrocketed for no apparent reason. Now details of the report have started appearing in the media, first in *The Globe and Mail* and now the *National Post*. Everyone knows there has been a leak.

Could the minister tell the House whether she has launched an investigation into who leaked this report?

Mr. Bill Blair (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise and advise the member that his speculations are completely without merit and absolutely false.

Let me be very clear. No member of this government has yet seen the task force's final report. We will see it at the same time as every member of Parliament when it is made public in mid-December.

As the member well knows, capital markets in this country are strictly regulated and the regulating authority for the Toronto Stock Exchange is the Ontario Securities Commission. It is an independent body responsible for looking into any evidence of market irregularities.

[Translation]

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as if legalizing marijuana was not already scandalous, the media are reporting other troubling facts this morning that suggest that the work of the task force on marijuana legalization may have been leaked. It seems that the only person who has yet to see the report is the minister herself. It is a Liberal task force with liberal recommendations for legalizing Liberal-friendly companies.

Will the Minister of Justice wake up, put on her minister's hat, and assure us that a formal investigation has been launched into this discredited task force?

[English]

Mr. Bill Blair (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has been unequivocal from the outset that we are committed to legalizing, strictly regulating, and restricting access to marijuana to keep it out of the hands of youth and to keep profits out of the hands of criminals. We are taking a public health-based approach to establish a system, to enforce a system of strict production, distribution, and sales of marijuana.

To provide the best advice on what is the best regulated regime for legal access to marijuana, the government appointed a task force in June. The task force finalized its report on November 30, and that report will be delivered to the government and made public in mid-December.

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HEALTH

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the health minister has threatened to cut health funding to Saskatchewan. Why? It is because of its new plan that has provided 2,200 MRIs over the last nine months at no extra cost to the taxpayer and well within the confines of the Canada Health Act.

Perhaps the Liberals should take lessons from Saskatchewan instead of racking up more deficits and raising taxes on all Canadians.

Why will the minister not stop attacking Saskatchewan as it works to reduce wait times and provide residents with the services that they need?

● (1150)

Ms. Kamal Khara (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we believe strongly that access to medically necessary health services should be based solely on medical need and not the ability to pay. In Saskatchewan, some individuals are being asked to pay in order to achieve faster access to MRIs than individuals who cannot pay for them. That seems to run counter to the principles of the Canada Health Act, which our government strongly supports. The Minister of Health has asked Saskatchewan to put an end to this practice.

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TAXATION

Mr. Ron Liepert (Calgary Signal Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as a former provincial health minister, I know full well the challenges that are facing health care today and to meet those challenges our highly trained professionals have formed partnerships so they can work in teams and Canadians can get the service they need. These partnerships are taxed as small businesses, but we all know what the Prime Minister thinks about small businesses. He thinks they are just a tax dodge. Now the finance minister is changing the tax rules, forcing these health care specialists to likely move to the United States.

Will the health minister today stand in the House and confirm that she will tell the Minister of Finance to reverse this policy before it negatively impacts Canadian families?

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear. The member knows this well because he sits on the finance committee. What we said is we appreciate the work that doctors are doing across the country. We said we are going to clarify the rule that provides that if people have a small business, they are entitled to one small business deduction. Canadians get it. Everyone gets it. It is about tax fairness in this country and we will pursue this down the road because that is the right thing to do for Canadians.

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FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Fin Donnelly (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week another whale died after becoming entangled at an open net salmon farm in British Columbia. That is two dead whales in three weeks. The science and the evidence is clear. Open net salmon farms are literal death traps for marine mammals. My bill before Parliament aims to transition harmful open net salmon farms to safe closed containment systems to protect marine mammals and wild salmon.

Will the government finally get serious about protecting marine mammals and will it support my bill?

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Cormier (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I share my colleague's concerns. Regarding his first question on whales, as everyone knows, our department is committed to ensuring the health and safety of aquatic environments. That is what we do in all of our activities related to aquaculture. Although it is extremely rare, it is an unfortunate thing when these marine mammals have adverse interactions with aquaculture operations and other marine industrial operations. Our department will continue looking into all marine mammal interactions and adjusting the permits accordingly in order to protect these species. I can assure the House that we take these concerns very seriously.

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TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in Abitibi—Témiscamingue, after paying through the nose for cellular service, people have to settle for lousy, at times non-existent reception. Outdoors, on a clear day, they might get one bar; otherwise, they are out of luck.

On long stretches of road, emergency services cannot even be reached. This is unacceptable. When is the government going to present a credible plan to ensure cellular coverage for individuals and businesses in rural regions?

Mr. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians' ability to communicate with one another and with the rest of the world is central to the digital economy and Canada's modern economy. In budget 2016, we announced a

Oral Questions

program to support broadband connectivity for Canadians across the country. We are going to make that connection.

For Canadians in Canada's rural and northern regions, access to high-speed Internet can unlock economic potential. We will certainly keep working in support of the digital economy.

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NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in order to manufacture the capability gap, the government has increased the number of CF-18s that the army must have available at all times. It took five minutes to make this change before confirming the purchase of 18 outdated Super Hornets. We have also learned that the government has deleted compromising information.

A National Defence report released two years ago on the life cycle of CF-18s and the exorbitant cost of an interim fleet has disappeared. We are beginning to understand why officials assigned to this file are muzzled for life.

What are the Liberals hiding from Canadians?

[English]

Hon. John McKay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada always prefers to be open and transparent, except when classified information is on the website. That report has been deleted because there was potential classified information there. The government is looking at trying to re-post that report as a redacted report.

It should be noted that a mixed fleet is not optimal. Possibly the Conservatives should have thought of that 10 years ago, when they should have held an open and transparent competition.

●(1155)

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government's love for communist regimes is a well-known fact. Long live Fidel and long live Mao's China.

The Liberals have taken a page from the Russians, who rewrite history with every new leader in order to reinforce the myth that surrounds them.

The Liberals are doing the same thing with the CF-18s. To manufacture a fake capability gap, they change policy, they muzzle those working on the file, and they eliminate compromising documents, such as the report on the life cycle of the CF-18s. The government's story makes no sense.

What else are the Liberals hiding from Canadians besides their gross incompetence?

[English]

Hon. John McKay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, maybe a little Conservative history would be in order.

Oral Questions

When the Conservatives announced the F-35 purchase, it was 65 jets for \$9 billion. Nine billion dollars became \$16 billion; \$16 billion then became \$25 billion to \$27 billion; \$25 billion to \$27 billion became \$42 billion to \$45 billion. Then the Conservatives were the only government in the history of Canada actually cited for contempt. Then they dropped the program.

Now the jets are 10 years older; and, now the minister is trying to repair this very unfortunate situation largely caused by the previous government.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, very clearly the government is changing its story on foreign and defence policy all the time. In a desperate bid to get a UN Security Council seat, the Liberals are preparing to send the Canadian military to fight in a place where troops will almost certainly encounter child soldiers. While the Liberals scramble to figure out their policy on shooting child soldiers, many Canadians are wondering why this was not considered before a commitment was made.

Why are the Liberals, without a plan and without a vote in the House of Commons, sending our troops into a situation that clearly looks more disastrous every day, again simply to get approval of the UN Security Council?

Hon. John McKay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's question does raise a very serious issue when contemplating peace support operations. It does demonstrate a willingness on the part of the forces to change doctrines when necessary. I want to thank General Dallaire for his contribution and for forcing us all to rethink the doctrine with respect to child soldiers.

This is clearly a good outcome from the defence policy review, and it puts the Canadian military at the forefront of military thinking in international affairs.

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TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, safety in the transportation sector is a priority for my constituents of Nepean. Following the tragic collision between an OC Transpo bus and a train on September 18, 2013 in Barrhaven, the Transportation Safety Board recommended that all “commercial passenger buses...be equipped with dedicated, crashworthy, event data recorders”.

Can the minister please inform this House on the actions he is taking in order to address this important matter?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, safety obviously is a key priority, and our thoughts are still with the victims and the families of the victims of this tragic accident.

As members know, the Transportation Safety Board investigated this accident and made a number of recommendations. We always value its recommendations. Earlier this week, the government put out an RFP for a feasibility study on the possible use of event data recorders on commercial buses.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last month the Liberals used Shell to claim support for their devastating carbon tax plan. However, Shell, citing bad government policy, cancelled the \$10-billion Carmon Creek project in Alberta, killing thousands of jobs in the town of Peace River.

This is only the beginning. Companies from across the country will continue to abandon Canada because of the Liberal carbon tax. Why is the government listening to companies rather than listening to struggling Canadians?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are very pleased that we are working with provinces and territories to develop a made-in-Canada plan to tackle climate change. I am also pleased to announce that 93% of Canadians live in a jurisdiction where there is or will be a price on carbon pollution. I am working very hard with all the provinces and territories to help them design a system that makes sense for them, creates jobs, and ensures a better and more sustainable future for our children and grandchildren.

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● (1200)

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Ron McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is extremely important to Canada's economy to have efficient highways that connect us to our families and communities and to goods and services. Could the Minister of Infrastructure explain how he is helping communities in British Columbia connect faster and more effectively?

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is a great question. There are many important hubs along British Columbia's highways, and that is why we approved projects worth \$310 million for those highways, with 50% of the cost covered by federal funding. This is for upgrades and expansions along the Trans-Canada Highway, including \$48.5 million for the Salmon Arm West project, for connecting communities and moving goods.

We are working with the provincial government to improve access to local roads and businesses. We will always be there for British Columbia.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Bob Saroya (Markham—Unionville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are borrowing every failed Kathleen Wynne policy. Wynne was forced to apologize for driving energy prices so high they are unaffordable for seniors and families. Wynne had to end her cash for access fundraising scheme, because everyone demanded she stop this unethical shakedown. Wynne also had to admit that her infrastructure plan built a bridge upside down.

Why do these Liberals not take Kathleen Wynne's lead, apologize, and quit following all her bad ideas?

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me tell members where we get our cues. As we did budget 2016, we went across Canada. We heard from 250,000 Canadians. We received about 5,000 submissions. That is why we did not—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Order. We were doing so well.

I just want to remind everyone that while someone is answering a question, we cannot throw another question at them and expect them to answer a second one. They will not hear it. I just want to ask everyone to stay calm and let us finish question period on a high note.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne: Mr. Speaker, I think we bring the best out in them when we speak.

For budget 2016 and the fall economic statement, we listened to Canadians. We went from coast to coast to coast, and the policies we are seeing in the budget, in the fall economic statement, are about Canadian families. They are about jobs, about the middle-class, about inclusive growth, and about infrastructure. That is what Canadians want. That is what they told us on the 19th of October. That is what we are going to do.

* * *

[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, would you like some evidence that francophones are second-class citizens in Canada?

At the RCMP, 16,000 jobs are English essential, but only 19 are French essential. That is so ridiculous and over-the-top that it seems like a joke. An independent Quebec will have a police force that speaks French.

That is Canada, a country that scorns Quebeckers and all francophones. It is shameful.

How can the minister explain this disgraceful situation?

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada's linguistic duality is a fundamental characteristic of our country. The RCMP has received and welcomes the recommendations of the official

Oral Questions

languages commissioner, and they will respond promptly with a remedial plan.

* * *

[Translation]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as part of the federal strategy to promote climate change, Kinder Morgan and Enbridge both got two fine pipelines, despite the opposition of many municipalities, first nations, citizens, and environmentalists. That has left TransCanada, which continues to lobby for the energy east pipeline, out in the cold.

Quebec has good reason to be concerned because now the government has proven that it does not care about social licence.

I am therefore asking the Minister of Natural Resources whether he will give us a break with the energy east pipeline, yes or no.

[English]

Ms. Kim Rudd (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we have said many times, our government believes that major projects must be reviewed by a process that carries the confidence of Canadians. The National Energy Board process to review the energy east project continues.

This week, Canada took a step forward in creating thousands of good-paying jobs for Canadians. The Trans Mountain expansion and Line 3 project will go forward, because they met our strict standard to address economic opportunity while protecting the environment we cherish.

* * *

● (1205)

[Translation]

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, with Bill C-29, the federal government is protecting banks against Quebec consumers and the Consumer Protection Act. That means that Quebeckers will no longer have any recourse when the banks impose hidden fees on them or rip them off. What a great precedent.

Next, cell phone companies will be asking the federal government to protect them from the Consumer Protection Act. Then Internet providers, cable companies, and airlines will be doing the same.

I am asking the minister of high finance and his private secretary where the gouging of Quebeckers will stop.

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am a parliamentary secretary, not a personal secretary.

Routine Proceedings

We are proud of Bill C-29. I would remind my colleague that what we did is very simple, as he is well aware. The Supreme Court's ruling in Marcotte asked us to clarify measures that protect citizens and consumers across Canada. That is exactly what we are doing. We have modernized and simplified the rules that help Canadian consumers. That is all.

For example, the rules in Bill C-29 will allow the use of a broader range of personal identification documents to open a bank account or cash Government of Canada cheques. That is what Bill C-29 will do. This bill will help—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member for Nunavut.

* * *

[*English*]

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Hon. Hunter Tootoo (Nunavut, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard.

The effective Atlantic and Pacific integrated commercial fisheries initiatives have enabled self-reliant indigenous commercial fisheries, benefiting first nations communities on Canada's east and west coast.

Implementing this program in Nunavut would generate economic growth and benefit Inuit communities on our nation's northern coast. Will the minister make this initiative a national program and ensure long-term financial certainty by permanently including this program in the departmental budget?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cormier (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague and good friend from Nunavut for his question.

I share my colleague's views on sustainable, science-based fisheries. We think this can create some good economic opportunities for Nunavut.

The programs on the Atlantic and Pacific coasts that our colleague referred to have enabled us to build strong relationships with first nations. We are very pleased to be working with him and other partners in Nunavut to develop economic and commercial fisheries in the north and Nunavut.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 14 petitions.

PETITIONS

SYRIA

Mr. Michael Levitt (York Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present my first petition in the House of Commons on behalf of the students at Madonna Catholic Secondary School in my riding of York Centre. The petitioners advocate for a peaceful end to the ongoing war in Syria. They call upon the government to work toward finding a lasting peace through diplomatic means and to help ensure that humanitarian aid reaches those in need.

COMMUNITY TELEVISION

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to present a petition on behalf of a number of residents, the good people of Arichat, Louisdale, Petit-de-Grat, D'Escousse, and many in Richmond County. They are concerned about community television and community television access. They want the government to ensure that communities have access to a network of community-operated media centres.

They are very committed to the survival of community TV and the availability of local media in towns and neighbourhoods that are not served by public or private media. It is essential to these communities. I present this petition on their behalf.

● (1210)

FISHERIES

Mr. Fin Donnelly (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table petition e-463, which was initiated by Alexander Morton and was signed by more than 7,000 Canadians.

The petitioners are concerned about the threat from disease, pollutants, and sea lice originating in open-net salmon farms. They are calling on the government to protect west coast wild salmon and to support Bill C-228, my private member's bill, that would transition harmful salmon farms to safe, reliable closed containment systems.

CANNABIS

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present petition e-115. Over 1,500 Canadians are calling on the government to allow for the personal production of cannabis as part of the upcoming cannabis legalization legislation. I would note that this would be an important aspect if we allow Canadians to grow five or six plants, undermining the black market, one of the key priorities of the legalization framework.

I would note, as the petitioners note, that the personal production of beer, wine, and other fermented alcohol is a legal activity for adults in Canada. Adults who choose to consume cannabis should be granted similar production rights as those who choose alcohol. We should treat Canadians like the responsible adults they are.

Routine Proceedings

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to present a petition on behalf of residents of Courtenay—Alberni and Vancouver Island calling for fair electoral representation. The petition is to ensure that Canadians have a fair electoral system. Our winner-take-all voting system results in a House of Commons where the number of MPs party supporters elect does not reflect the number of voters who cast ballots for the party. They would like to introduce a suitable form of proportional representation after the public consultations that have taken place.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 543 to 546, 551, 552, 557, and 558.

[Text]

Question No. 543—**Hon. Maxime Bernier:**

With regard to the Canadian Police Information Center: (a) how many individuals are there in Canada who may be potentially considered too dangerous to own firearms including the number of persons wanted for a violent criminal offence and the number of persons of interest to police including (i) violent persons, (ii) known sex offenders, (iii) known prolific, dangerous or high risk offenders, (iv) known persons to have been observed with behaviour that may be dangerous to public safety; (b) the number of persons charged with a violent criminal offence; (c) the number of persons awaiting court action/disposition or released on conditions for a violent criminal offence including (i) on probation or parole, (ii) released on street enforceable conditions, (iii) subject to a restraining order or peace bond; (d) the number of persons prohibited or refused firearms; (e) the number of persons prohibited or refused from hunting; (f) the number of previously deported persons; (g) the number of persons subject to a protective order in any province in Canada; (h) the number of persons with a refused or revoked firearms license; and (i) the number of persons flagged in the Firearms interest Police database?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Police Information Centre, CPIC, system is an integrated, automated central repository of operational law enforcement information that allows for immediate storage and retrieval of current information on crimes and criminals. Administered by the RCMP on behalf of the Canadian law enforcement community, it is the only national information-sharing system that links criminal justice and law enforcement partners across Canada and internationally. The information contained in the CPIC databanks originates from law enforcement and public safety partners and is owned and maintained by the contributing agency.

CPIC agencies are responsible for entering and maintaining records pertaining to their ongoing investigations. The discretion to add any CPIC record rests with the investigating police agency. The overarching premise upon which CPIC was founded and to which all CPIC partner agencies continue to commit is to use the CPIC system to the benefit of public safety and the communities they serve.

The CPIC system is a record database and was not designed to provide in-depth statistical analysis. CPIC records may be added, modified, or removed by contributing agencies at any given time. As such, information contained in the CPIC system is fluid and any number obtained from a search of the system would reflect a “point

in time”—snapshot of that particular instant when the system is queried.

A multitude of free text fields—including offences, conditions, and remarks—are used to describe particulars of a CPIC record. The CPIC system is designed to allow contributing agencies the flexibility to input pertinent public safety information based on the needs of the occurrence. This further limits the RCMP's ability to fully analyze the data and produce comprehensive reports.

It is also important to note that the CPI Centre does not have electronic copies of all documents that lead to charges and convictions maintained within the CPIC identification databank. Those documents are maintained by local police services.

Due to these factors, the CPI Centre is unable to provide numbers that would accurately depict the information contained in the CPIC system as they relate to question Q-543.

Question No. 544—**Hon. Maxime Bernier:**

With regard to the reclassification of firearms: (a) is the government planning on prescribing any firearms as non-restricted; (b) is the government planning on prescribing any firearms as restricted; (c) is the government planning on prescribing any firearms as prohibited; and (d) is the RCMP planning on making any changes to the Firearms Reference Table; (e) is the RCMP currently involved in any reviews that could lead to changes to the Firearms Reference Table; and (f) if the answer of any of (a) through (e) is affirmative (i) what is the make and model of the firearms in question, (ii) what are the reasons for its change of classification, (iii) what year was the firearms first imported into Canada, (iv) what steps are being taken to proactively notify impacted Canadians?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a) to (c), the government believes in balanced, effective measures with respect to firearms, which prioritize public safety while ensuring that law-abiding gun-owners do not face unfair treatment under the law. It will work with Canadians to achieve the shared goal of reducing gun violence in Canada.

The Government has committed to putting technical decision-making about firearms classification back into the hands of police. The RCMP is responsible for the technical determination of the classification of firearms in accordance with the criteria stipulated in the Criminal Code.

With regard to (d), the Firearms Reference Table, FRT, is a computer database managed by the RCMP Canadian firearms program that is used by national and international law enforcement officers to improve accuracy in firearms identification and record keeping, import-export control cases, and information sharing. The RCMP is continually adding, revising, and updating records in the FRT to remain aware of changes in the firearms marketplace.

The FRT software is presently being rewritten to modernize the computer code and increase efficiency, but this has no impact on the classification of firearms. The RCMP is not planning any changes to the classifications of firearms already catalogued in the FRT database. The RCMP is presently adding new firearms to the FRT database that are being assigned a classification for the first time in accordance with the provisions of part III of the Criminal Code.

Routine Proceedings

With regard to (e) and (f), the answer is no.

Question No. 545—**Hon. Gerry Ritz:**

With regard to the tariffs on drywall imported for use in Western Canada which was imposed by the government on September 6, 2016: (a) since September 6, 2016, how much revenue has been collected as a result of tariffs on drywall; and (b) how much revenue is projected to be collected from drywall tariffs in the following fiscal years (i) 2016-17, (ii) 2017-18, (iii) 2018-19, (iv) 2019-20?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), during the period of September 6, 2016—the date of the preliminary determination of dumping of certain gypsum board originating in or exported from the United States of America—to October 17, 2016, \$4,925,016.65 in provisional anti-dumping duties were collected on gypsum board, commonly known as drywall, under the Special Import Measures Act, SIMA.

With regard to (b), on June 8, 2016, pursuant to its legal obligations under the SIMA, the CBSA responded to a complaint filed by CertainTeed Gypsum Canada Inc. by initiating an investigation into the dumping of certain gypsum board originating in or exported from the United States of America. While the CBSA made a preliminary determination of dumping on September 6, 2016, a final determination has yet to be rendered by the president of the CBSA. Moreover, on October 13, 2016, on the recommendation of the Minister of Finance, the Governor in Council referred to the Canadian International Trade Tribunal the matter of whether the imposition of duties on certain gypsum board from the United States is contrary to Canada's economic, trade, or commercial interests, and whether it has had or would have the effect of substantially reducing competition in western Canada or causing significant harm to consumers or to businesses. As such, it is not possible to make projections of SIMA duties on gypsum board at this time.

Question No. 546—**Hon. Gerry Ritz:**

With regard to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change between November 4, 2015, and October 17, 2016: (a) how many meetings has the Minister, or her exempt staff, had with each of the following organizations, or representatives from the following organizations (i) Western Canadian Wheat Growers Association, (ii) Canadian Trucking Alliance, (iii) Canadian Cattlemen's Association, (iv) Canadian Canola Growers Association, (v) Pembina Institute, (vi) David Suzuki Foundation (or David Suzuki himself), (vii) Greenpeace Canada, (viii) Canada 2020; and (b) for each of the meetings referred to in (a), what was the (i) date, (ii) location, (iii) list of attendees?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this government has demonstrated its clear commitment to openness and transparency. We believe in evidence-based policymaking and meaningful consultation with Canadians.

Meetings with key stakeholders and experts help to inform the policy development process. For a listing of lobbyist interactions, please visit the Registry of Lobbyists, which is the central source of information about individuals, not-for-profit organizations, and for-profit corporations who lobby the federal government, found at: <https://lobbycanada.gc.ca/app/secure/oc/lrs/do/clntSmmrySrch?lang=eng>

Question No. 551—**Hon. Steven Blaney:**

With regard to the proposed tax credit for talk shows: (a) what are the details of the proposed tax credit, including qualification criteria and rates; (b) what is the projected impact that the proposed tax credit will have on government revenue for

the next five fiscal years, broken down by year; and (c) what are the details of any studies the government has done related to the economic or cultural impact of talk shows including (i) title or description of study, (ii) findings, (iii) cost or value of contract, (iv) date of contract, (v) contract file number, (vi) name of organization or title of individual who conducted the study?

Mr. Randy Boissonnault (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), talk shows are a source of jobs in the television industry. We firmly believe in the value of the creative sector. That is why we made a historic reinvestment in arts and culture in the budget, and why we continue to value programs like this as a source of jobs and economic growth.

The Canadian film or video production tax credit, CPTC, administered pursuant to section 125.4 of the Income Tax Act and section 1106 of the Income Tax Regulations, is a refundable corporate tax credit designed to encourage the creation of Canadian film and television programming and to develop an active domestic audiovisual production sector. It is co-administered by the Department of Canadian Heritage through the Canadian Audio-Visual Certification Office, CAVCO, and the Canada Revenue Agency.

To be eligible for the CPTC, a production must meet a number of requirements, including, but not limited to, minimum Canadian content points for key creative positions, e.g., director, screenwriter, picture editor; Canadian copyright ownership; Canadian producer control; a minimum percentage of certain prescribed costs being Canadian; and confirmation from a Canadian broadcaster or distributor that the production will be shown in Canada.

A production also cannot be an ineligible genre of production listed under the definition for “excluded production” in subsection 1106(1) of the regulations. This list of ineligible genres previously included “talk shows”. An amendment to the regulations published in the Canada Gazette, part II, on October 19, 2016, has removed “talk shows” from the list of ineligible genres.

The CPTC is available at a rate 25% of eligible labour expenditures incurred by a production company, which are capped at 60% of the production's total costs, net of assistance.

With regard to (b), a tax credit is generally seen as foregone revenue, but the CPTC is also a driver of economic activity in the Canadian film and television industry, and thus contributes to the government's aggregate tax revenues.

With regard to (c), the Department of Canadian Heritage conducted an analysis on the impact the amendment to the regulations would have on the value of the tax credit. The department has ongoing discussions with key players from the television production industry

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 552—Hon. Steven Blaney:**

With regard to the address by the Minister of Foreign Affairs to the 62nd General Assembly of the Atlantic Treaty Association on October 11, 2016, where he stated that “Russia’s actions represented, and still represent, a clear breach of international law”: (a) what specific international law did Russia violate; (b) has the government made a formal request to any international body such as the International Criminal Court or the United Nations to prosecute Vladimir Putin or any other Russian officials for breaching international law; (c) if the answer to (b) is affirmative, what are the specific details, including dates of any such requests; and (d) for each violation which the government believes that Russia has committed, what are the possible range of sentences or other punishments which could result from a prosecution of such violations?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), through Russia’s occupation and purported annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, hereinafter “Crimea”, Russia violated the Charter of the United Nations, in particular article 2(4), which states the following:

All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations.

Russia’s actions in Ukraine have violated and continue to violate the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine. This obligation was reached by the UN General Assembly, UNGA, in Resolution 68/262 of March 27, 2014, passed by a majority of members, including Canada. Canada does not and will not recognize the illegal annexation of Crimea, which it considers an integral part of Ukraine. Canada continues to deplore the violations of Ukraine’s sovereignty by Russia and its destabilizing activities in eastern Ukraine, in breach of security assurances provided in the 1994 Budapest Memorandum and not respecting the rights of the people of occupied Crimea by imposing Russian laws, and that Russia has violated the rights of minorities, particularly the Crimean Tatars.

With regard to (b), Russia is not a state party to the Rome Statute, which established the International Criminal Court, and neither is Ukraine. The court has launched a preliminary examination of the situation in Ukraine, including in Crimea and Donbass, with a view to determining whether the opening of a formal investigation is warranted. There is no other international criminal court that has jurisdiction to prosecute individuals for crimes committed in Ukraine.

In order to maintain pressure on Russia until it fully complies with its international obligations with respect to Ukraine, on November 28, 2016, the special economic measures regulations in regard to Ukraine have been amended to list 15 additional individuals, including six members of Russia’s State Duma from Crimea, who are subject to an asset freeze and dealings prohibition. These sanctions are in response to the September 18 election of officials residing in Crimea to Russia’s State Duma. Canada does not support the legitimacy or the outcome of these elections held in the occupied Crimean peninsula, as it has never recognized Russia’s illegal annexation of Ukraine’s Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol.

The Government of Canada also announced on July 8, 2016, that it will deploy Canadian troops in Latvia, supporting security and

stability efforts for Ukraine. This is Canada’s most significant contribution to NATO in decades, and will help deter Russian aggression.

With regard to (c), please refer to answer (b).

With regard to (d), the ICC may impose penalties on a person convicted of a crime under its jurisdiction per article 77 of the Rome Statute: <http://legal.un.org/icc/statute/romeofra.htm>

Question No. 557—Mrs. Cathy McLeod:

With regard to on-reserve housing: (a) does Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada track the number of homes built by individuals on-reserve; and (b) if the answer to (a) is in the affirmative, how many homes have been built by individuals on-reserve since 2010?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in 2010, a decision was taken to stop collecting data on homes built by individuals on reserve in order to reduce the reporting burden on first nations. The last data set collected, analyzed, and published was for reference year 2010. Starting in 2011, changes were made to the reporting cycle, which included eliminating the data field from the tool by which first nations reported this information.

INAC recognizes that housing data is important to support future policy development and is currently engaging with first nations to improve housing outcomes, including discussion on appropriate data collection tools. To further support this work, INAC will track the number of homes built with funds from targeted budget 2016 investments.

Question No. 558—Mrs. Cathy McLeod:

With regard to statements by the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs that First Nations band members can receive financial information of their band from the Minister’s office: (a) how many requests have been received by the Minister from First Nations band members; (b) how many requests have been received by Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada from First Nations band members; (c) how many First Nations band members have received the information requested from the Minister; and (d) how many First Nations band members have received the information requested from Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, statistics on the number of requests received from first nations band members for financial information have never been formally collected. However, the department and the minister have received requests in the past for financial information.

As a result, the department has provided financial information to band members or directed them to where it was available online.

* * *

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if Questions Nos. 547 to 550 and 553 to 556 could be made orders for returns, they would be tabled immediately.

Routine Proceedings

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 547—Mr. Jamie Schmale:

With regard to a possible extradition treaty with China: (a) how many individuals presently residing or located in Canada are currently wanted for arrest in China, or if firm statistics are not available, how many Chinese arrest warrants issued for Canadian residents is Global Affairs Canada aware of; (b) what is the Prime Minister's official position with regard to the possibility of an extradition treaty with China or with the negotiation of such a treaty; and (c) what is the Minister of Global Affairs Canada's official position with regard to the possibility of an extradition treaty with China or with the negotiation of such a treaty?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 548—Mr. Jamie Schmale:

With regard to the Minister of Finance, since November 4, 2015: (a) what is the complete and detailed list of all instances where government owned aircraft was used to transport the Minister, his exempt staff, or his Parliamentary Secretary, and for each instance, (i) what was the origin of the flight, (ii) on what date did the flight originate, (iii) what was the final destination, (iv) on what date did the flight reach its final destination, (v) were there any intermediary stops, and, if so, what were they, and what was the date of arrival and date of departure, (vi) which passengers were on the flight, (vii) who authorized the flight, (viii) what was the total cost, (ix) what was the cost for the flight crew, (x) what was the cost for fuel, (xi) what was the cost for food and beverages; (b) what is the complete and detailed list of all instances where private, chartered, or rented aircraft was used to transport the Minister, his exempt staff, or his Parliamentary Secretary, and for each instance, (i) what was the origin of the flight, (ii) on what date did the flight originate, (iii) what was the final destination, (iv) on what date did the flight reach its final destination, (v) were there any intermediary stops, and, if so, what were they, and what was the date of arrival and date of departure, (vi) which passengers were on the flight, (vii) who authorized the flight, (viii) what was the total cost, (ix) what was the cost for the flight crew, (x) what was the cost for fuel, (xi) what was the cost for food and beverages; and (c) what is the complete and detailed list of any flights not covered in (a) or (b), excluding regularly scheduled commercial flights, used to transport the Minister, his exempt staff, or his Parliamentary Secretary, and for each instance, (i) what was the origin of the flight, (ii) on what date did the flight originate, (iii) what was the final destination, (iv) on what date did the flight reach its final destination, (v) were there any intermediary stops, and, if so, what were they, and what was the date of arrival and date of departure, (vi) which passengers were on the flight, (vii) who authorized the flight, (viii) what was the total cost, (ix) what was the cost for the flight crew, (x) what was the cost for fuel, (xi) what was the cost for food and beverages?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 549—Mr. Jamie Schmale:

With regard to the James Michael Flaherty Building located at 90 Elgin Street in Ottawa, since November 4, 2015: (a) what is the total amount spent on renovations; and (b) what is the specific breakdown for the amounts spent on (i) new furniture, (ii) re-upholstered furniture, (iii) carpeting, (iv) flooring, (v) other renovation expenses, specifying the nature of each expense?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 550—Mr. Jamie Schmale:

With regard to personal styling and coaching, since November 4, 2015, broken down by department, agency, and crown corporation: (a) how much has the government spent on (i) makeup, (ii) makeup artists, (iii) hair products, (iv) hair stylists, (v) any stylists not covered by (ii) or (iv), (vi) personal coaching, (vii) media coaching, (viii) any other coaching not covered by (vi) or (vii); (b) what is the breakdown of each expenditure including (i) date of purchase or contract, (ii) duration of contract, if applicable, (iii) amount of contract, (iv) amount spent, (v) contract file number, (vi) vendor name; and (c) which of the expenditures referred to in (b) were for a Minister or Ministerial exempt staff?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 553—Hon. Steven Blaney:

With regard to the Prime Minister's trip to Medicine Hat, Alberta, on or around October 13, 2016: (a) what are the costs associated with (i) the flight broken down by individual expense, (ii) other transportation costs, (iii) accommodation costs, (iv) food and beverage costs, (v) amount paid to PMO staff in per diems associated with the trip, (vi) other expenses, broken down by individual type of expense; (b) what specific government events did the Prime Minister attend while on the trip; and (c) what is the date, time, and location of all events referenced in (b)?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 554—Mr. Phil McColeman:

With regard to travel and hospitality expenses approved by a Minister or a member of his or her exempt staff, but incurred by individuals who were not Government of Canada employees at the time which the expense was incurred, since November 4, 2015, broken down by minister's office, what are the specific details of each expense, in the case of travel expenses, broken down by trip, including (i) total amount spent, (ii) amount spent on airfare, (iii) amount spent on other transportation, specifying type of transportation, (iv) amount spent on hotels, (v) amount spent on hotels or other accommodation, (vi) amount spent on per diems, (vii) dates of travel, (viii) origin and destination of each trip?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 555—Mr. Phil McColeman:

With regard to hotels, per diems, and other commercial accommodation in the National Capital Region for Ministerial exempt staff since November 4, 2015, broken down by Minister's Office: (a) what is the total amount spent; and (b) what is the detailed breakdown including (i) amount spent on per diems, (ii) amount spent on accommodation, (iii) number of nights the accommodation was provided, (iv) cost per stay, or nightly rate for accommodation, (v) name of vendors, (vi) contract or file reference numbers?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 556—Mrs. Cathy McLeod :

With regard to the government's commitment to adopt and implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: (a) what are the titles of all briefing notes provided to the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs in the period between November 4, 2015, and October 5, 2016, from Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada; and (b) what are the titles of all briefing notes provided to the Chief of Staff to the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs in the period between November 4, 2015, and October 5, 2016, from Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada?

(Return tabled)

[English]

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

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2016, NO. 2

BILL C-29—NOTICE OF TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of International Development and La Francophonie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I regret to inform the House that an agreement could not be reached under the provisions of Standing Orders 78(1) or 78(2) with respect to the report stage and third reading stage of Bill C-29, a second act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 22, 2016, and other measures.

Under the provisions of Standing Order 78(3), I give notice that a minister of the Crown will propose at the next sitting a motion to allot a specific number of days or hours for the consideration and disposal of proceedings at the said stage.

REPORT STAGE

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-29, A second Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 22, 2016 and other measures, as reported (with amendment) from the committee.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques has five minutes for questions and comments.

The hon. member for Sherbrooke.

• (1215)

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will follow up on the remarks by the hon. member and Minister of International Development and La Francophonie by saying that I am somewhat surprised to see a time allocation motion after just an hour of debate on Bill C-29 at report stage. That is really surprising.

Usually members are given more time to consider the many amendments proposed at report stage. Several amendments were announced. Unfortunately, we debated at report stage from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m and then suddenly, after an hour of debate, we learned that the time for debating Bill C-29 would be limited.

Could my colleague comment in real time on the fact that the government intends to allocate a specific amount of time for the study of the bill at report stage?

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, like my colleague from Sherbrooke, I was in the last Parliament. These types of motions were came up regularly, and any real negotiation on the length of the debates on the bills was immaterial.

When the Liberals were in the opposition, they complained about this tactic by the Conservatives, but here they are using it themselves. In fact, they are using it for bills that represent our most fundamental work in Parliament, in other words, budget bills.

I do not get it. I would like a minister or a Liberal member, especially those who were here during the 41st Parliament, to explain to us why they now have no problem adopting the same

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tactics and approach as the Conservative government, whose approach they once condemned.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the NDP might want to reconsider in terms of how they might be voting on the issue of the budget implementation bill. The budget implementation bill ultimately implements the budget, and we see a very progressive budget.

Could the member enlighten the House as to when he believes there has been a more progressive budget than we currently have, one that does so much for so many Canadians, whether it is the tax break for the middle class, the enhancement of the Canada child benefit program, or the enhancement of the guaranteed income supplement?

It does so much for every region of our country. Why not support the budget implementation bill?

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, that is the thing: saying it is progressive, does not make it so; saying that the climate change targets set up by the Conservatives are progressive, does not make it so; saying that the trade agreements negotiated by the Conservatives are progressive agreements, does not make it so. Really, the varnish is starting to be removed from this whole fabrication of the Liberals.

The Liberals are saying that their budget is so progressive, that so many Canadians will benefit from their tax cuts. Well, no, actually it leaves out over 23 million Canadians and benefits merely 9% of the population. This is not progressive. It is basically taking from the rich to give to the little less rich.

Our concern is the fact that most of those earning less than \$90,000 a year would benefit little, if at all. They have actually been completely abandoned by the Liberals. This is why we are objecting to the direction that the Liberals are headed. I have not even started to talk about the infrastructure commitment, which, honestly, is going nowhere at this point.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, what the member just said is factually incorrect.

How can the member say that when he knows full well that the guaranteed income supplement is affecting those individual seniors making less than \$20,000 in a tangible way, and when we are lifting tens of thousands of children out of poverty?

What the member just said is factually incorrect. Does the member understand what this budget is actually doing for a majority of Canadians?

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, even a broken clock gives the right time twice a day.

The GIS increase is actually something we welcomed. However, when we are saying that the Canada child benefit will benefit more kids, that might be the case for now, but the Liberals are leaving it unindexed for four years, which will bring it back to close to what it would have been otherwise under the previous government.

I do not think the miracles that the Liberals are claiming they are doing right now are actually true and factually accurate.

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• (1220)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-29, which implements certain provisions of the budget tabled in March.

I am pleased to speak today because I am very proud to see that our government is keeping its promises and commitments to Canadians, the middle class, families, seniors, students, workers, retirees, and veterans. All of these people work or worked very hard and deserve a good quality of life and better futures. These people often struggle to make ends meet; they need measures to help them meet their everyday needs. That is what our budget measures do.

Talking about the budget provides me with an opportunity not only to express my support for Bill C-29 but also to talk about the people in my riding who will be affected by the provisions of this bill. These people put their trust in the Liberal Party. They put their trust in me by voting for me in October 2015, and I thank them from the bottom of my heart for their support. I can tell them today that they made the right choice. They voted for the right party. The bill before us today is further proof of that.

Many measures in the 2016 budget address the concerns and interests of the people, businesses, and communities in Laval. Even today, 11% of Alfred-Pellan's population is comprised of low-income earners. These people need help to meet their most important need, which is housing. The Liberal budget makes major investments of \$1.5 billion over two years to improve access to safe, adequate, and affordable housing.

Other vulnerable people benefit from this budget's measures. The Canada child benefit will finally give more to those who need it most. This measure will lift 300,00 children in Canada out of poverty. In my riding, it will benefit 14,505 families with children, who will no longer pay taxes on this benefit, and will have the full amount at their disposal.

During a community event at the church in Vimont last week, Joe, a constituent with no political affiliation or interest in politics, told me that the \$425 a month makes a big difference. This measure will mainly help the 5,290 single parent families in Alfred-Pellan, which will receive more money to help provide better living conditions for their children. This benefit is much more generous than the benefits provided by the previous government and it gives more money than before to families with children. Families will see their benefits increase by almost \$2,300 on average in 2016-17. This will allow families like Joe's to buy winter clothing, groceries, school supplies, and clothing. It will allow other families, like that of Marie-Carmelle and Robert, to save for their children's education.

Let us also talk about seniors, Canada's human legacy. Our government knows how important it is to improve their quality of life. For that reason, the budget includes such measures as the OAS enhancement. We also recently announced the enhancement of CPP benefits. This will ensure a comfortable and dignified retirement for our seniors who built the Canada of today.

• (1225)

As my Aunt Giuseppina said, after so much sacrifice and hard work, she can finally rest assured that she will not be a burden to her

children. Her savings and her government are all she needs to live with dignity. That gives us a good sense of what these measures mean to people.

Bill C-29 implements some very specific measures from the last budget. These measures are part of our overall plan to stimulate economic growth in the short term and, most importantly, pave the way for a strong economy in the long term. Our country has the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio in the G7. This is the right time to invest for our future success and to ensure a prosperous and green future for current and coming generations, a future in which everyone has a chance to succeed.

As a father, I want to make sure that my son, Gabriel, who is almost three years old, has a sustainable, prosperous future full of opportunity. That is what my parents did for me. That is what informs my day-to-day work as an MP: the prosperity and well-being of the people of Alfred-Pellan. They expect their MP and their government to understand what things are like for them and to pass budgets that reflect their reality and help them make the most of their lives.

[*English*]

Let us not forget our veterans, those who sacrificed so much to preserve our dearest values and uphold the peace in land and all over the world.

The government will give back to veterans, who have given so much in service to all Canadians, by restoring critical access to services that were recklessly cut by the previous government and ensuring the long-term financial security of disabled veterans. Canada's veterans will receive more local, in-person government services as well as better access to case managers.

Last week, I discussed with a very concerned constituent the issues of unemployment. Mario, a 55-year-old hard-working gentleman, found himself laid off from his job and wanted to know how our government would help him and the thousands of people in the same position. I assured Mario that the changes to the current EI system that we were proposing would give Canadians the help they need when they needed it, be it the changes to eligibility rules, which would make it easier for new workers and those re-entering the workplace to claim benefits; the reduction of the waiting period from two weeks to one week, which would provide unemployed workers with hundreds of dollars more at the time they needed it most; or the extension of employment insurance benefits in regions affected by the collapse of the price of oil and other commodities that would be aimed to ease the burden of Canadians in parts of Alberta, Saskatchewan, northern Ontario, and Newfoundland.

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Our Prime Minister has deployed enormous efforts to make Canada once again a leader on the international stage. Helping international development for Canadian businesses and to ensure that our financial sector remains strong, we will strengthen the framework that regulates financial institutions and balance the need for stability and competition with the needs of consumers and businesses.

Moreover, as a matter of fairness for all taxpayers, the government will seek to prevent underground economic activity and tax evasion, and combat tax loopholes.

We will invest in effective administration and enforcement of tax laws and we will propose actions to improve the integrity of Canada's tax system.

All these measures define my unwavering support to Bill C-29. I invite all members to reflect on the benefits Bill C-29 has for Canadians and join in support of the bill.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as we just heard from one of the ministers in the government, the Liberals are going to move time allocation again next week. It will be the tenth time they have moved notice. Why are they ceasing debate on the bill at this point?

As a new member in the House, I was looking forward to an opportunity to hear what other members had to say about Bill C-29. Now we are not going to get that opportunity. Does the member really think that 337 members are going to show up to a committee in the Senate at some point, perhaps new witnesses, to further talk about this?

The Liberals are proposing to spend billions upon billions of dollars in the future with very little return on it. We have seen what their jobs plan has been for Canada and Alberta: No net new jobs. They have completely failed. Why is his government in such a rush to shut down debate in the House and spend billions of taxpayer dollars?

• (1230)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

Bill C-29 implements certain measures of budget 2016, a budget that marks a turning point after 10 years, during which the only objective was to avoid a deficit—but at what cost? Seniors, children, women, veterans, low-income Canadians, and basically anyone who is vulnerable, all paid the price. This is all not to mention the cuts to programs related to science, R and D, and the environment.

Our government knows that now is the time to invest in order to create high-quality jobs, lift hundreds of thousands of kids out of poverty, help young people with their post-secondary education, and invest in R and D to make Canada a great place to invest in potential new businesses.

These measures are associated with a long-term vision for a prosperous future. We are a government that understands the day-to-day reality of middle-class Canadians. That is why we are targeting our measures and our investments, so that the middle class and those working hard to join it stand to benefit the most.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague on his speech. He talked about numerous positive measures in the budget.

I want to come back to one specific point. He touched on the benefits for seniors. Under Bill C-29, couples who are receiving the guaranteed income supplement and the spouse's allowance but have to live apart for reasons beyond their control, such as the need for long-term care, will each receive benefits based on their individual income.

For the benefit of those watching us, can the member elaborate on this and paint a clearer picture of what this really means for many senior couples?

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his very insightful and very important question for the seniors in my riding and across Canada.

As we know, ageing has its downsides. Unfortunately, loss of autonomy and illness are in store for many seniors. These conditions sometimes mean, for instance, that a spouse has to stay at a long-term care facility or an assisted-living facility. This means that the couple has to live apart. Just imagine the cost related to this involuntary and heartbreaking separation for so many couples. These tough situations only add to their financial burden.

Through our measure, the benefits a couple will be entitled to will not be based on their combined income, but on the income of the beneficiary, which in many cases will allow them to have a higher benefit and better meet their growing needs.

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to join this debate, which I know now be a very brief debate because of the notice of motion the government has brought forward. I appreciate the opportunity to address it nonetheless.

We hear the government speak often about the issue of sustainability. Sustainability is a very important concept. It is about maintaining the things we are enjoying and have created into the future so our children and grandchildren will be able to enjoy the same quality of an environment, the same standard of living, the same standard in social programs that we enjoy today.

What needs to be underlined with the fiscal policy of the government is that it is very clearly unsustainable. There are certain instances where it makes sense to run timely, targeted, and temporary deficits. However, it does not make sense to have an intentionally unsustainable fiscal policy, one in which promises are made that cannot be maintained over the long term, and programs are created that will have to be cut in the future.

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Commitments are made with regard to spending on infrastructure, spending on social programs, and taxes that the government knows cannot possibly last. It is setting people up for disappointment, just as it did on the electoral reform file, by the way. However, on fiscal policy and social programs as well, the government is setting people up for disappointment with its unsustainable fiscal approach.

Let us be very clear about contrasting the approach of the Liberal government with that of the previous Conservative government. I would never accuse members of the government of lying, certainly that is unparliamentary. However, there is a clear dissonance between the reality and the things government members have said.

Let us be very clear about the record in this respect. We heard the parliamentary secretary again claim that Stephen Harper added over \$150 billion to the national debt. That is a clear instance of dissonance between the realities and the comments made by the parliamentary secretary.

The reality of the record is that managing Canada's finances through the worst economic recession since the Great Depression, the previous Conservative government, over the course of its tenured office, reduced the overall debt-to-GDP ratio. The numbers are very clear. When former prime minister Stephen Harper took power, the federal debt-to-GDP ratio was 34.1%. When he left office, the federal debt-to-GDP ratio was at 31%. Very clearly, there was a lowering of the federal debt-to-GDP ratio during the time in which the previous Conservative government was in power.

Yes, stimulative deficits were undertaken during a very significant global economic crisis, but they were done in a way such that not only did we return to balanced budgets, but the overall debt-to-GDP ratio went down.

In terms of raw, nominal numbers, a total over \$128.5 billion was added to the national debt, much lower than \$150 billion. What is the significance of the difference in numbers? It simply illustrates that there is a clear dissonance between the talking points being cited by the various government members and what Canadians can find if they look at the government's own website with respect to the numbers. Again, it was a lower number than was quoted in terms of additions to the national deficit and a reduction in the debt-to-GDP ratio.

It is worth adding in this context that if we try to figure out what the government is talking about when it comes up with this \$150 billion, some have speculated that maybe it is only counting the amount that was added to the national debt during deficit years, not including the amount that was subtracted during the various Conservative surpluses.

Then we wonder whether it was only those years that the government was counting and not the other years. Even if we only count those years, it adds up to \$145 billion. The government is still off. Again, it is certainly not misleading the House but creating a situation of dissonance between what is actually happening, according to the finance minister's website, and what the words are that are coming from the government. Again, I encourage Canadians to verify those facts. They are very clearly in black and white, and can be found on the Finance Canada website.

● (1235)

That is the current reality. The plan from this finance minister involves not only a dramatic increase in the national debt, a greater increase over the one term, hopefully, of the current government, but a greater increase in debt than has happened during the worst global financial crisis. That is happening while we are not in a time of global financial crisis. Also, the Minister of Finance's plan involves increasing significantly the debt-to-GDP ratio. According to TD forecasts, the Liberals' spending will take the debt-to-GDP ratio to 38%. Again, the debt-to-GDP ratio went down from 34.1%, when the previous prime minister Stephen Harper took office, to 31% when he left office. Now, according to these estimates, it will go up to 38% under the current Liberal government.

The question here is not whether there are certain situations where we can run a deficit; the question is whether we have a sustainable fiscal policy. The finance minister has been asked before if it is his view that the government should ever balance the budget. He has repeatedly declined to answer that question. We have had the suggestion that Liberal governments clean up the budgets in the long term, in the fullness of time. However, it is right for us as the opposition, and for Canadians, to ask what is the fullness of time in this context, because the budget projections do not show any return to a balanced budget at any point.

We have not had any kind of estimate in that respect at all. We simply know that the Liberals intend to dramatically increase the debt levels at a time when we are not in the midst of a global financial crisis. They will significantly increase the federal debt-to-GDP ratio, and that creates an unsustainable situation, one in which all of their glorious promises, whether on social policy, on infrastructure, on spending on the environment, will unfortunately lead to painful cuts in the future, unless we get back on to a track of real fiscal sustainability.

Let us underline, as well, that when we talk about the federal debt-to-GDP ratio, people like to compare Canada to other countries and say we have a much lower federal debt-to-GDP ratio than those other countries. However, Canada is different, insofar as we have provincial and municipal governments that provide a much greater share of public services than are provided at the subnational level in other states. When we are doing international comparisons in terms of the challenges we face in debt in this country, we should look at total government debt, not just federal debt to GDP. We have the Province of Ontario led by a Liberal government. The Province of Ontario is the most indebted sub-sovereign borrower on the planet. Our total government debt-to-GDP ratio is quite high. It is similar to levels in the United States, the U.K., and other countries.

We cannot, at all, take our position for granted. It is important that we have a real plan for fiscal sustainability over the long term, and we are not seeing this from the government. Not only are we seeing a misstatement of the record, but we are seeing a complete absence of a plan when it comes to the long term.

Government Orders

There is an important question that the government needs to answer, and hopefully it will have time to answer in the much-shortened debate that the Liberals have given us. That is, at what point will the Liberals be prepared to learn from what is happening in the real economy?

They have undertaken a dangerous experiment, one that I would argue we have every reason to already know the results of. They claim that this massively unsustainable fiscal policy they have undertaken will somehow stimulate the economy. Let us be very clear that this is not at all the traditional economics of stimulus. John Maynard Keynes would be rolling in his grave by the extent to which he has been misused by the current government. He believed that we should run targeted temporary deficits, that it was acceptable to run deficits during years of relative struggle, and that it would create a counter-circular push, but then the savings had to come on the other side. The current government's plan is long-term, constant deficits.

When will the Liberals learn the lesson? It has been a year, and they are still talking about slow growth. Unemployment is where it was a year ago.

• (1240)

I would like to know at what point the government will change its course if its plan does not work. Will it take two years, three years? Will it at some point realize it is not working and that it needs to go back to the policy of the previous Conservative government? I hope the Liberals will do that sooner rather than later.

• (1245)

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Gatineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every time members on that side of the House get up and give a speech about debt, I am struck by their temerity. They watched as the previous government, a government that was reimbursing Canadian debt, that was reimbursing debts incurred by previous Conservative administrations, and doing it even before the financial crisis, then proceeded to rack up nine consecutive years of structural deficit. Those members now have the temerity to walk into the House and ask about deficit and debt under this Liberal administration. We are trying to dig out from under low commodity prices that the Conservatives presided over, an infrastructure deficit, a social deficit, and any other kind of deficit one would care to mention.

Where was that member when the previous government was racking up debt on our children and grandchildren for nine consecutive years?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, to answer the member's question directly about where I was when the previous government racked up debt for nine consecutive years, I was clearly reading completely different newspapers than he was at the time, and perhaps looking at a different Finance Canada website.

I laid out the numbers clearly. It is breathtaking how willing government members are to completely misstate the fiscal record when it is very clearly laid out on their own government website. I gave that information: timely, temporary, and targeted deficits during the worst global financial crisis since the Great Depression, which simulated the economy. Over the Harper years, there was a reduction in the debt-to-GDP ratio from 34.1% to 31%. The member needs to check his facts, because he is shouting incorrect numbers across the

floor. The debt-to-GDP ratio went from 34.1% to 31% over the Harper years. The finance minister's plan calls for an increase from 31% to 38%, according to TD Bank forecasts, in terms of the debt-to-GDP ratio, and this is at a time when we are not in the midst of a global financial crisis. These are just the basic numbers.

Just because government members say it, does not make it true; Canadians can check the record. Canadians can check the facts.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if it seems like money is being managed responsibly, then it is easier to tolerate debt under certain circumstances.

In this case, rural municipalities thought they were getting money for desperately needed infrastructure projects. Now all of a sudden that money is going into an infrastructure bank, where projects will only be considered if they are worth at least \$100 million. In other words, none of the rural community projects will be getting any of this money.

I recently found out that the Liberal government decided to award a \$74,000 contract, or the cost of two cars, to determine how much pot costs on the black market. A consultant was given \$74,000 to come up with an answer, when the police already know how much pot costs on the black market.

What does my colleague think of the government's management? Does he believe that the government is managing money responsibly, which might justify the debt, or does its approach seem entirely improvised?

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, my colleague represents a constituency that includes a significant rural component, as do I. It is important that we have a government that understands the infrastructure needs that exist across the country, not just in our big cities. There is a lot of concern in my constituency, and I suspect in my colleague's as well, that the way the government is acting does not show much regard for the needs and the importance of rural Canada.

When we are talking about deficits, I appreciate that there are certain cases where it makes sense to run a deficit, but there is a need for sustainability. The Conservatives and the NDP have different philosophies about certain things, but we recognize the need to have balanced budgets, to have sustainability. If the government is going to make a commitment, whether it is to increase transfers, to lower taxes, to increase spending on a social program, that commitment has to be costed; it has to be paid for. If the government makes a commitment without any kind of plan for fiscal sustainability, then people need to know it is not going to happen over the long term.

• (1250)

Mr. Neil Ellis (Bay of Quinte, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to speak to Bill C-29, the budget implementation act.

Prior to my role as the member for the Bay of Quinte, I served for eight years as the mayor of the City of Belleville. My municipal experience gave me a full appreciation of the impact that infrastructure has on our communities.

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The city of Belleville, having a population of 50,000, and being a small urban municipality, has many infrastructure deficits. Investments in infrastructure provide communities with safe roads, clean water and air, efficient transportation networks, and so much more. Our infrastructure needs have outpaced our investments for decades, and at significant cost.

The perfect storm is here. It is hurting our communities. It is very important that we keep driving investment and finding new alternative ways to support the needs of our communities.

Neglected aging infrastructure directly contributes to traffic congestion, which pollutes the air and stifles the productivity of our workers and businesses. It contributes to boil water advisories that affect the health of entire communities. It means that our seniors have a harder time accessing essential services, and that some of our population have great difficulty finding safe and affordable places to live.

As I have personally experienced, underfunded infrastructure puts our cities at a competitive disadvantage. When competing to attract top companies, either the local market or the global market, it is hard to create good-paying jobs without proper infrastructure.

The City of Belleville was like so many other communities across Canada, starved for infrastructure funding and facing a mounting infrastructure deficit. Upon being elected as mayor, I began to see first-hand just how large this infrastructure deficit was in our community, and how it was growing with no real plan to fix it.

Speaking with my colleagues at AMO, association of Ontario mayors, 444 of us excluding Toronto, I realized that most municipalities in Ontario had aging infrastructure. I was finding in my community that we were not unique. Small urban communities and cities across Canada were in a similar position. There was simply no infrastructure funding to meet the needs of municipalities. The tax system with municipalities is basically property taxes and user fees. Municipalities provide 66% of our services in Ontario, yet collect only around 8¢ on the tax dollar.

The City of Belleville, an average small city, has over \$3.5 billion worth of assets. This includes roads, bridges—69 bridges, I believe—public facilities, water, waste water plants, which were all built in the forties, fifties and sixties. However, they never had an asset management plan to keep these structures in repair.

After examining this asset management plan, I realized that our city was in trouble. We had approximately 350 in terms of millions of dollars in a past deficit that was hidden, a deficit that was not on our books, and a deficit that kept growing out of control. It was a construction deficit that was increasing at the time between 5% and 10%. We had interest rates that we were able to acquire at approximately 2.5% locked in. It is all about capital risk. Being a small business person myself, one of the biggest problems is obtaining capital, locked in, at an amount that could get rid of the risk.

With Infrastructure Ontario, we were able to build a plan, and our solution was a build Belleville plan. This was the second infrastructure plan to try to alleviate some of the infrastructure that was stockpiled to the city over the last 25 years.

The rationale is simple. Each year that the cost of infrastructure repairs are left and not taken care of, they increase. All of a sudden, a \$300-million deficit becomes a \$330-million or \$340-million deficit. With infrastructure, we are not quite sure what the costs will be, so it is floating.

Coming up with a plan for locking in our capital risk, recognizing that interest rates were low, it was time to launch a plan and try to convince council that we needed to mitigate the risk of bridges collapsing. We had to mitigate the risk of not having a waste water plant that was capable of meeting our industry.

City council supported build Belleville and the \$91.5 million loan for the first stage of infrastructure upgrades and maintenance. The build Belleville plan was featured in many trade publications, including *Canada Business Review*, *Municipal World*, *The Undergrinder* and *ReNew*.

● (1255)

The program not only attracted the attention of magazines and media, it attracted a great deal of attention from municipalities. In 2008, I was asked to speak at AMO, to all mayors about the plan.

My city is also in the plan. It expanded our industrial park by extending roads and services to build our economic base. It has put us in a very great position now to attract industry and create more jobs.

This past August, I met with local mayors to announce over \$7 million in federal gas tax funding. This is specifically for municipal infrastructure projects. More recently, I held an announcement event at our local college, Loyalist College, for a \$1.6-million federal investment toward a \$3.2-million renovation of the Northumberland wing and health and wellness centre. The wellness centre hosts the school's highly respected practical nursing program and state-of-the-art clinical simulation lab.

This investment will make for greater energy efficiency, which has positive impacts both on the environment and the school's operating budget. Of course, it will significantly improve the learning environment and hopefully keep our youth and our community educated, and help in the workforce.

These are good reasons why it is so vitally important that we continue to work with our municipal and provincial partners across the country to develop a long-term infrastructure plan that meets the real needs of all communities across Canada.

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Our government will provide more than \$180 billion over 12 years for public transit, green and social infrastructure, and trade and transportation. These investments will have a dramatic impact on all communities across Canada, including small communities and rural regions. The plan provides unprecedented levels of funding for projects across the country, projects that will help create long-term economic growth; build safe, inclusive, and sustainable communities; and support a low-carbon, green economy.

Budget 2016 launched the first phase of our infrastructure plan, which will invest a total of \$11.9 billion. This includes \$3.4 billion for public transit systems, \$5 billion for green infrastructure projects, and \$3.4 billion for social infrastructure, which includes affordable housing.

During my community pre-budget consultations, our not-for-profit agencies could not stress enough the importance of investment in safe and affordable housing. The first phase of this investment makes possible repairs and upgrades to long neglected critical infrastructure. Bilateral agreements were signed with all the provinces and territories, and more than 750 projects have already been improved.

Projects are already under way in our rural and smaller communities such as: waste-water upgrades in Red Deer, hard surfacing of the Trans-Labrador Highway, upgrades to the town of Lanigan's water facilities in Saskatchewan, rehabilitation of bridges in the Northwest Territories, a new Pond Inlet small craft harbour in Nunavut, and a water treatment plant upgrade in my neighbouring town of Deseronto.

We have also made major investments in infrastructure projects for public transit that once complete will help drastically reduce congestion in our cities, and get all moms and dads home earlier, hopefully, to spend time with their families and to get their families safely home. They are things like the light rail transit in Ottawa, the Toronto Commission surface track replacement program, the Waterloo Fairview Mall transit terminal, and the Trent-Severn Waterway National Historic Site, for a total investment of \$267 million.

I had the great honour, on a hot summer day, to be with a great Conservative member, the member for Simcoe North, in Peterborough to cut the ribbon on the announcement of the Trent-Severn system, which affects my community, as the Trent Port Marina in Quinte West is the start of the Trent. I invite everyone to visit the Trent Port Marina in their boats this year, and come and enjoy our wineries and our cities.

Equipping municipalities with the resources they need and access to low-risk capital is essential to sustain and grow our communities, providing the building blocks they need to thrive and succeed. Infrastructure is an essential component for healthy, vibrant communities, and creates the conditions for sustainable economic growth and development. Investments in infrastructure are investments in our future and that of our children.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to ask about the infrastructure bank, because that was one issue the Liberal Party did not run on in the last election, and in particular the impact of that infrastructure bank on smaller communities. We already heard many times in the House that those with a population of 100,000 or less will not benefit from this infrastructure bank.

I would also like the member's comment on this. When FCM recently visited Ottawa I met with them and I was shocked to learn that when the Prime Minister had his meeting with the equity banks and investment firms, there was not one representative from FCM at that table. I am just wondering if he could confirm that, and answer the question about the infrastructure bank.

● (1300)

Mr. Neil Ellis: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for his question and for his municipal experience. I know that he and I have talked about our municipal experiences.

Members are well aware of capital risk. When we look at Ontario, it has an infrastructure program that gives loans to municipalities, and gets away with that capital risk.

Smaller projects are sometimes less risky and easier to obtain funds for. However, for bigger projects that are Canada-wide or projects that need financing, it is time to look at that capital risk. If we, through the infrastructure bank, can get these projects pushed forward and get private investment, we cut down and reduce that capital risk for cities to get these projects done on time and on budget. This is what we are trying to do.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Bay of Quinte for his speech.

I gave my speech earlier and I was surprised that I was not confronted by some Liberal members. I made some rather serious allegations about the Liberals' lack of results with respect to infrastructure and about the infrastructure bank, which my colleague just mentioned.

Does my colleague not realize that the infrastructure bank gobbled up \$15 billion that the people of his riding could have used? Does he not realize that it will not be in the infrastructure bank's interest to choose and invest in his community's projects because the population density is not as high as that of other cities, like Montreal, Toronto, or Vancouver? Does he also not realize that despite the urgent need for infrastructure investment, a point on which he and I agree, the infrastructure bank will only be set up in 2017, and two-thirds of the funds will not be available before 2021-22, or two elections from now?

I would like him to be able to reconcile what he said in his speech with these facts, which were brought to light in the government's economic and fiscal update.

Government Orders

[English]

Mr. Neil Ellis: Mr. Speaker, when we talk about time frames and planning in infrastructure, we all know that infrastructure is built for a 20- or 30-year period. In past experiences, to get infrastructure launched, it is usually three or four years to get a shovel in the ground. From past experience, when we look at a city intersection and tell the staff that they have been given all the resources and money to complete that infrastructure, by the time they do the needs study, environmental study, it takes a long time to implement programs and get them out. Therefore, it is about planning in a cycle.

My daughter attends Queen's University in an MBA program. She phoned me the other day and asked me a similar question. She said that we were planning outside the election cycle. Well, it is about looking at what the total infrastructure is, making plans out of that cycle, and building in a 10- or 15-year plan to totally create a plan that does eliminate infrastructure deficits.

If the hon. member, or any member, wants to run their next election on cancelling the infrastructure program or not extending it past our mandate, I would invite them to do that.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour to rise today to address the chamber on this important subject.

Every society is judged by how well the most vulnerable fare among the rest of the population. Canada is no different. In this country, we have witnessed a spectacular decline in poverty, particularly over the last decade, under the previous government.

In the mid-1990s, poverty rates in Canada peaked. They reached a high in the mid-teens. People in the country who were at the bottom end of the economic ladder were suffering. However, gradually, over the course of the previous decade, we saw that number drop to 8.8%, which was both the lowest level in Canadian history and the biggest decline that has occurred under any government since the low-income cut-off line was established in 1976. To understand the reasons why, we have to examine the policy conditions under which it occurred.

Let us start back in 1976, when the low-income cut-off line was created. During that period, poverty was measured to be about 13%. About 13% of people had to spend more than 20% above average on the basic necessities of life, things like food, clothing, shelter, and utilities. That actually increased during the final eight years of the Trudeau government, from 13% to 13.8%.

Of course, that was a period in which middle-class incomes also declined. They declined by about 8%, according to the very first chart in the very first budget Mr. Trudeau's son introduced here in the House of Commons. In that time, poverty grew.

Now, that might seem counterintuitive, because Pierre Elliott Trudeau liked to style himself as a man who pursued a just society, one built upon massive state intervention, big government. Government was aggrandized under the pretext of creating social justice: taking from the rich to give to the poor. This is particularly interesting, because after the period during which Pierre Elliott Trudeau increased the size of the federal government to 24% of the Canadian economy, the middle-class incomes of average Canadians plummeted, again according to data the present Liberal government

released in its recent budget, and poverty actually went up. This demonstrates that as government gets bigger, the poor get poorer.

That, of course, runs counter to all the narratives we have been taught for so long. We have been taught that big governments equalize society, that government and the state are like a grand fairness machine, constantly taking from the privileged in order to give to the many.

In fact, as government gets bigger, the poor get poorer. Why does this happen? For one, in a government-run economy, a company is rewarded if it has the best lobbyists. In a free market economy, a company is rewarded if it has the best product. Government-run economies are based on force. Free enterprise economies are based on billions, literally billions, of voluntary transactions. In a free market economy, millions of people, through billions of transactions, decide what businesses produce and at what price. In a government-run economy, the state tells people what they get and what they will pay for it. In other words, it is a relationship of force, and in any relationship of force, the most powerful win.

Who are the most powerful? They are the people who can afford to hire lobbyists to pressure the government, lawyers to get around the rules or to sue those against whom they are competing, and accountants to avoid paying the cost of the massive apparatus we call the state. Those are the powerful interests that always do best when government gets big.

We see this in the province of Ontario, where the government introduced something called the Green Energy Act, which was supposed to create jobs producing windmills and solar panels. What actually happened?

• (1305)

According to the Auditor General of Ontario, over the whole life of this program, a massive government program that forces consumers to pay higher electricity bills in order to purchase wind and solar energy would increase the cost of electricity by an extra \$160 billion, above and beyond what it would have cost otherwise. Of course, those costs will fall on the backs of the people who can least afford it, the poor. Electricity and other utilities make up a larger share of the income of poor families than it does of rich families.

Furthermore, wealthy interests are able to pay to have a solar panel put on their house or to invest in a wind turbine park in somebody else's backyard. Wealthy interests are able to aggrandize their own financial situation by benefiting from the government forced pricing system that rips everyone else off. In fact, the former Liberal Party president, Mike Crawley, presided over a company that received a half a billion dollar contract in the process. A lot of wealthy insiders were made instant millionaires overnight and a lot of middle-class people were made instant food bank goers at the same time.

Government Orders

Food banks from places like Windsor have said that people have come in with their hydro bill, saying they have a choice to either eat or turn the lights on, so maybe the food bank can feed them so they can pay the bills. Again, it is a massive wealth transfer from the very poor to the very rich, from the have-nots to the have-yachts.

We see other similar examples. The carbon tax will raise the price of the basic necessities of life, things like heat, hydro, food, and shelter. Those are things on which a lower income family spends a third more of their income than does a wealthy family. In other words, low-income people will pay more as a share of their income than will rich households. The result is that those with the least will suffer the most. Who will benefit?

In Ontario, the government says that it is going to use the money to subsidize all kinds of green programs. Already such programs exist. One paid for five millionaires to buy the wealthiest car ever produced, the Porsche 918 Spyder, under the guise that this was a very green car. Middle-class taxpayers suffering to make ends meet were paying for millionaires to buy Porsches.

The story goes on and on. The Liberals and people on the left like to compare themselves to Robin Hood, taking from the rich to give to the poor. In reality, Robin Hood was not a redistributionist. Robin Hood was not a medieval Marxist. He was a tax fighter, leading probably the most famous tax revolt in the history of our civilization. He fought against heavy taxation by his arch nemesis, who was a tax collector, the Sheriff of Nottingham, and who at the time collected from the peasants and the landowners so he could aggrandize all of the adventures and the luxuries of the aristocratic elite.

In a much less admittedly dramatic form, we see that occur again and again throughout history. The result is that throughout history we have seen that as government gets bigger, the poor get poorer. We see in studies done by the former IMF director, when he compared big government countries, medium-size government countries, and small-size government countries, that countries with the smallest governments actually had the best social outcome; that is those countries where government represented less than 40% of the economy.

The empirical data shows that if we want to give people opportunity, particularly those with the least, we do so by getting government out of the way and unleashing the unmatched force of free enterprise to allow people to pursue their own dreams and benefit from their own work, invest in their own ambitions, and build up their own communities. That is the way to lift up those with the least. That is the way to build a stronger and more vibrant middle class. That is the reason why we were able to reduce poverty to unmatched levels under the previous government. It is the only way that the current government will continue to build on that success.

• (1310)

[Translation]

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Gatineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, whose riding is across the river from my riding of Gatineau.

[English]

The member again is getting very good at reciting all of the dogma and the failed experiments in supply-side economics. What he fails

to realize is that with respect to outcomes, in terms of the real world, and in terms of what we were left as the situation when we entered office was a failed economic experiment by relying unduly on commodities in our country; crumbling infrastructure; a social deficit in social housing, as my friend from Belleville outlined, or other measures, we were in all sorts of social deficit; and, finally, nine consecutive years of unfettered, unchecked borrowing. The Conservatives never saw a ledger with black ink.

The member now chooses to get up and speak from the Friedman school, but while in power, demonstrated none of that orthodoxy or discipline that he now would have us espouse. Could I get the member to explain a bit of the dissonance that I am experiencing?

• (1315)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, I cannot explain the dissonance the member is experiencing, but I can explain our record. We reduced the size of the federal government to its smallest as a share of the economy in the last 50 years. We had the least expensive government as a share of the economy in the last half century, and the results were very positive. As I said, poverty rates fell down to 8.8%, which is the lowest level in recorded history, much lower than when the Liberals were previously in government and vastly lower than during the last Trudeau government, whose policies the present government is trying to replicate.

The member talked about supply-side economics. He and his party subscribe to a theory of trickle-down government. If they take money from working people and they put it on the top of a big bureaucracy, it will trickle down through that bureaucracy, then it will go to another level of government, then maybe to the municipal government and then it will be given to interest groups that will fan out, and a few drops will trickle down to the people at the bottom who pay the bills. We do not accept trickle-down government. It is a theory that has been disproved time and again. It has failed. It leads only to bankruptcy and suffering, as we saw in Greece.

We believe in bottom-up economics. We raised the personal exemption by \$1,500, lifting a million people off the tax rolls altogether. We lowered federal income taxes for people earning less than \$30,000 a year by 90%. The result was people were able to earn their way out of poverty and build a brighter future for themselves.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to know whether my colleague also gets the impression that the Liberals are living on another planet and that they do not understand people's daily reality at all.

They do not seem to understand what it means to live on \$23,000 or \$25,000 a year while supporting two or three children. The government does not even consider people like that to be part of the middle class. How can it make sense to act this way without even understanding what Canadians' day-to-day lives are like? How can it make sense to abandon these people, particularly those living in rural communities?

Government Orders

Does the member get the impression that the Liberals are living in another world and completely out of touch with people's everyday financial reality?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, I do get that impression.

I think that the Liberals surround themselves with people who are extremely well-off and who can give them \$1,500 donations. The Prime Minister is meeting billionaires at the Ritz-Carlton. The Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance are millionaires themselves. The Prime Minister had a very privileged life. I am not condemning him for that, but it is clear that he grew up in an environment where he never had to worry about money. He was always given everything he wanted.

People who have to work for a living are the ones who are suffering as a result of this government's elitist policies.

[*English*]

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to speak in the House this afternoon on something that really is a centrepiece of our government's policy moving forward: the budget. The budget is important to Canadians in so many ways, but, in particular, because it represents a strong and courageous change in direction from policies that the previous government undertook that would have the impact of making my children and grandchildren and everybody else's children and grandchildren across the country a whole lot weaker for many years.

We plan to invest over \$180 billion in infrastructure over the next 11 years. So many of these expenses will directly touch upon my riding, such as social housing. The previous government, over the past 10 years, completely abandoned its responsibility in the area of social housing. I am privileged to sit in the House next to the member for Spadina—Fort York, who greatly inspired our platform and, therefore, greatly inspired the budget as it now stands. I really would like to pay homage to him.

He has an urban riding in Toronto, which is much like my urban riding in Montreal, and the housing needs are glaring, in particular, because of the federal government's abandonment of its responsibility 10 years ago. We need better social housing, we need to renew co-op agreements, which are very important in my riding. We need to have the money available for those co-op agreements to be renewed, and for those co-operative housing arrangements to reinvest in their own infrastructure, such that the buildings do not become dilapidated and continue to be vibrant communities moving forward.

My riding straddles the end of the city and the beginning of the suburbs, and there is the question of affordable housing as well. We need to be flexible to allow homeowners to repair their own homes and for landlords to repair their rental properties, particularly at the lower end of the rental scale, such that tenants will have a good stock of affordable housing. The fact that we have had the courage to say we will run deficits in order to improve our stock of social housing and infrastructure generally, I think, is an important change of direction.

There is also money in infrastructure for social innovation and technological innovation, two things that are very dear to my heart. I

taught intellectual property for many years and have had to follow, for professional reasons, quite happily, I might add, the whole digital revolution. The world has changed immensely since I started teaching intellectual property in 1998. It has been unbelievable and the possibilities created for both economic advancement and the reshaping of society through the digital revolution are breathtaking.

I have, and I hope to have, social innovation projects accepted for my riding, as well as trying to bring some of the fruits of the digital revolution into my riding to create good middle-class jobs, but also to allow people to live closer to where they work and allow the community to thrive in that manner. It is a new generation where people do not necessarily want to commute for a long time in order to get to work. I hope I have the ideal riding for that possibility. By investing in infrastructure, particularly in these kinds of digital areas, we might be able to create those possibilities.

My riding is also blessed with two jewels, the St. Lawrence River and the Lachine Canal, both of which could profit greatly from investment in green infrastructure. The Lachine Canal is, for many reasons, so historically important in the history of Canada, in the development that occurred along that canal. Now we need to re-deploy the Lachine Canal as a recreational space. That requires infrastructure spending not just on the canal itself, such as the walls of the canal, and its development into a 12-month-a-year recreational facility, but also for decontamination.

● (1320)

All the lands in the southwest of Montreal are effectively contaminated because of their industrial history. Moving forward on any kind of project, whether around the Lachine Canal or whether a social housing project in Verdun or in Ville-Émard, we need to be thinking about funds for decontamination in order to make our infrastructure projects work.

Let me open with the following, because we are talking about the environment, and it is something that I feel needs to be said in the House as regards the price on carbon. People who speak out against a price on carbon seem to think they have a right to pollute. It used to be treated in the economics literature as an externality, something a property owner or business owner did not have to think about. It was external to his or her thinking. However, that kind of analysis is completely wrong. No one has the right to pollute. No one has the right not to consider these externalities of their own business activities. It is their responsibility precisely to consider the environmental impact of everything they do. It is part of the responsibility of being a property owner. It is part of the responsibility of being a business owner. I spent the better part of 20 years as a property theorist arguing just that. Therefore, it is not unjust to price carbon. In fact, it is equitable and just, and it is righting a historic wrong, whether in terms of analytical thinking or in terms of justice itself.

One of the most courageous things we are doing in this budget is the idea of an infrastructure bank. This is precisely in recognition of the fact that some of our infrastructure needs are so great that we need to turn to pools of investment capital in Canada and throughout the world to realize these kinds of projects.

There is a project currently being conceived in Montreal for a high-speed rail. Funding for that would come from Quebec's massive investment from the Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec. This is the kind of project that the investment bank would target. They are projects that have some income stream that an investment fund or pension fund might want to invest in over the long term, with a stable and steady rate of return for its investors.

Why not tap into this? It makes possible all sorts of projects that will help my children and grandchildren move around the city of Montreal, should they choose to stay there, or anyone else. It really takes courage. We envisaged this in our platform, it was in our campaign booklet, and we are bringing this to reality. It is going to be fantastic.

Finally, I need to speak about the families in my riding, both the young and the old.

The Canada child benefit will help many families who live in my riding who are struggling to make ends meet. This non-taxable benefit, which is much more generous than the previous benefit, will certainly be an advantage over what we previously had, a miscellaneous mumbo-jumbo of tax credits and whatnot that was far less generous than our single, clear program.

When the future Prime Minister announced this in Montreal at the Olympic stadium, it was pointed out that the 70,000 seats in that stadium matched how many kids in Quebec would be raised out of poverty by this measure. I am proud to be part of that.

Finally, for the seniors in my riding, reducing the age for eligibility for benefits to 65, increasing the old age supplement, in addition to what we are doing in Bill C-26 on the CPP, means that our benefits for seniors are going to give them a dignified retirement. It will help, in particular, those who are really struggling, and believe me, I met many of them at the door.

There are measures in here to help veterans. There are measures in here as far as employment insurance goes. It would take another two or three days to recite these, but I am happy to conclude at this point by saying that this is a courageous budget. "Courage" is the word that characterizes it. We have had the courage to come forward to take these measures, put them in place for our kids and our grandkids, and I am proud to be part of it.

• (1325)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member will have five minutes of questions coming to him when we resume debate on this legislation.

It being 1:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's Order Paper.

Private Members' Business

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1330)

[*English*]

FISHERIES ACT

The House resumed from November 1 consideration of the motion that Bill C-228, An Act to amend the Fisheries Act (closed containment aquaculture), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to speak to Bill C-228, an act to amend the Fisheries Act in regards to closed containment of finfish aquaculture and provide my thoughts, my comments, and my background on a few points on the bill.

I appreciate the efforts the member for Port Moody—Coquitlam has made on behalf of wild salmon over a number of years. However, he is not the only one in the House who has taken up helping wild salmon. This member has also been working for wild salmon for nearly 20 years. I am guessing there are members of the House from Atlantic Canada who have also put in some time on behalf of wild salmon on that side of the country.

I have had the privilege of being an active conservationist in streams, lakes, and rivers, where we could go today and see the ongoing benefits of the work done. Just before I returned to this fall sitting of Parliament, I spent some time working with DFO staff, first nations members, and conservation club members, some of whom had travelled from distant communities. We spent some time in hip waders and gum boots, slugging through muck and silt to the mouth of the Salmon River. There we worked with burlap fencing, sandbags, shovels, and sweat to rechannel the lower portion of the river into a singular channel that would be deep enough for migrating Chinook salmon to reach their spawning grounds.

For years this river delta has been filling in with silt to a point that it spread out in multiple small fingers, none of them deep enough for the fish to leave the lake and continue the last few miles to their spawning beds. These fish, nearing the end of a spawning migration of hundreds of miles, had only a few miles to go. Without the blood, sweat and blisters of the DFO staff, first nations, and volunteers working together, those fish would not have reached their spawning beds and not have been able to complete their mating ritual and produce the next generation of wild salmon.

Now members might wonder how this has relevance to Bill C-228, which speaks to salmon aquaculture. Well the silt that had filled in the Salmon River Delta is allegedly from years of logging and farming practices along the river's course. Although these practices may be the cause of the siltation and restricting the ability of salmon to access their historic spawning channels, government is not planning to shut down or remove the farmers and loggers from their ability to continue to farm or harvest timber.

Private Members' Business

What is being done instead is that farming and logging practices are being improved. Farmers are being encouraged to build exclusion fencing to keep livestock out of the river. They are being encouraged to replant riparian areas and stabilize stream banks so that not only do the salmon benefit but the farmers benefit when they do not lose more land being washed downstream during next year's spring freshet.

Through collaborative efforts, changes are being made. Farming and other activities that drive our economy are able to continue so people have jobs and jobs pay taxes, and taxes pay for schools and hospitals. That is why it is relevant.

Bill C-228 would force government and aquaculture farmers to completely move or change their current practices. Bill C-228 would force government to compensate these fish farmers for their losses and provide employment insurance for displaced workers.

Rather than provide incentives and encourage improvement in practices, Bill C-228 would virtually eliminate a viable, job-creating, revenue-generating farming sector right out of the province and probably right out of the country. Representatives of the salmon farming sector have indicated that the expense of moving and changing their operations to closed containment would leave them little option. Increased operating costs would necessitate that they reduce their costs, especially transportation of goods to market. This would mean industry would move to markets in the U.S., in New York, Los Angeles and overseas to Asia, virtually destroying jobs and income in Canada.

• (1335)

While there are risks and possible causes for wild salmon decline, I believe those risks are better managed or mitigated through collaborative programs where fishermen, farmers, and industry can work together to improve situations that may be impacting our wild salmon.

Another point I would like to touch on in this bill is that it only refers to salmon aquaculture in Canadian waters off the Pacific coast. I wonder what our Atlantic colleagues in the House would have to say about the implications of Bill C-228 expanding to the Atlantic coast. I find it interesting that we have heard little from those Atlantic members on this. I wonder if they are even paying attention.

Bill C-228 also states that the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans must:

Within 18 months...prepare, table in Parliament and implement a plan for transition to the use of closed containment facilities setting out, among other things, specific support measures for corporations and workers in the finfish aquaculture sector affected by this transition in order to protect the jobs and financial security of those workers, including training and income support through the employment insurance system.

While I believe we need to support workers who may have lost their jobs through reasons beyond their control, I do not believe we should pass a bill that would, for a start, kill jobs, that would drive revenue-generating business out of Canada, and then have taxpayers compensate those businesses and workers that are impacted. Bill C-228 says nothing about the continued viability of the businesses or the long-term stability of the remote communities they support.

I recognize the member for Port Moody—Coquitlam for his efforts for wild salmon, but the proposals of Bill C-228 are under-developed and under-defined. They seek to tear down the barn before a new barn can be built. While there is a chance this bill could see amendment at the committee stage, that cannot be assured.

I recognize that there are concerns and issues with our wild salmon on both the Atlantic and Pacific coasts, and that these issues need to be addressed and managed. However, Bill C-228 would fail to promote co-operation of employees, commerce, and government for the improvement of operations on a collaborative basis. Bill C-228 would fail to consider the practicalities of the transition and adaptation of a sector that provides 6,000 long-term jobs, many of which are in our coastal communities. Bill C-228 would add to the tax burden borne by hard-working Canadians.

While I have expressed my own commitment and concern for wild salmon and admit that there is much to be learned, the issues I have just listed prevent me from supporting Bill C-228. What I could support is a collaborative approach to the issues and a collaborative plan to manage our wild salmon and our aquaculture sector.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have today in this Parliament a historic opportunity to act on the key recommendations of the Cohen Commission to protect wild salmon and the wild salmon economy and to innovate and take action on coastal job creation.

The importance of wild Pacific salmon cannot be overstated. They are the foundation of indigenous culture in British Columbia. They are the foundation of our coastal ecology, and they established British Columbia's settlement pattern.

Salmon support a \$102-million west coast commercial fishery employing 1,400 people. They support a \$326-million west coast recreational fishery employing 8,400 people. They fuel a \$783-million west coast wilderness tourism industry employing 26,000 full time, and roughly 40,000 in total. Yet wild salmon are at risk globally. Due to climate change and the increased prevalence of salmon farms along migratory routes, salmon populations on the west coast are at serious risk.

Worldwide, since 1975, oceans have absorbed 90% of the excess heat from global climate change. Worldwide, fisheries, as a result, could lose \$10 billion of their annual revenue because of climate change.

Private Members' Business

Since salmon farms proliferated on our coast in the nineties, Fraser sockeye populations have crashed. In 2009, the salmon run on the Fraser River saw only 1.4 million fish, a drastic low in spawning returns from typical levels, which are usually 20 million to 30 million. Sockeye salmon at our latitude are threatened with extinction by 2050, and potentially all species of salmon are threatened with extinction by 2100, if we do not act. This would affect everything, moving up the food chain, including resident killer whales.

Writes Diana Hardacker from the riding I represent, "I teach students at the Nanaimo River Fish Hatchery about the important irreplaceable role that Pacific Salmon play in the health of our ecosystem, and our health. Any threat to that, namely disease from Atlantic salmon, is unacceptable."

I agree. Open-net fish farms are a further threat to Pacific wild salmon. They are located in key migratory areas for wild salmon, and there is evidence that they are harming wild salmon. Feces and waste feed damage the ecosystem near fish farms. They promote the spread of disease and allow sea lice to flourish.

Imagine being a wee salmon minnow running the gauntlet of net-pen fish farms on the migratory route. They emerge bristling with sea lice. Salmon have enough to contend with between ocean, river, lake, and four years out in the ocean without this impossible burden of sea lice. If and when viruses spread to wild salmon, which are already under threat from sea lice, the results could be even more catastrophic.

I salute the work of Alexandra Morton. She is a heroine on our coast for standing up for wild salmon and ringing the alarm on science and the threat from salmon farms.

We need to transition to closed containment. West coast salmon, wild salmon, are under threat from sea lice, pollutants, and diseases coming from open-net fish farms. We have seen this happen already. Norway, Chile, Scotland, and now B.C. have all had problems with their wild salmon fishery as a result of the contamination from open-net fish farms. We cannot afford the declining wild salmon population, and we cannot afford the aquaculture collapse.

I heard about this from Julie Smith, who wrote to me, "As someone who was a commercial fisher for over 25 years and now has lost my job because of the decline of fish returns, this is something I feel very strongly about. Please support this, it is important."

I urge the government to do the right thing and transition this industry to safe closed containment technology.

New Democrats called for a judicial inquiry into the sockeye collapse of the Fraser salmon run, and then we championed the implementation of the recommendations resulting from the Cohen Commission. The new Liberal government has promised full implementation of Cohen's recommendations, yet 18 of its 20 deadlines have passed already without any action.

Cohen said that the Government of Canada should remove from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans' mandate the promotion of salmon farming as an industry and farmed salmon as a product.

● (1340)

Never was the need more clear to remove that conflict of interest than when we heard the DFO parliamentary secretary in debate last month proclaim the spotless record of the aquaculture industry. It is just not fair.

We heard strong words from Cohen on the precautionary principle and the possible link between open-net salmon farming and the decline in wild salmon.

We are arguing in the bill today that closed containment salmon farms are the solution for the west coast. They would create jobs while protecting wild salmon. We already have 70 licensed closed containment fin farms in British Columbia already, so the technology is proven. They would keep the farm environment on the farm, and the wild environment wild. They would protect wild salmon from parasites like sea lice. On-land fish farms can better control the water temperature and water quality, maximizing the efficiency of growth, which is good for the salmon farming business.

It is time to innovate. The rate of change in this industry is tremendous and Norway and Denmark are already generating very good results. This is proven technology and we are already making great strides across Canada in closed containment Atlantic salmon production with Sustainable Blue in Nova Scotia and Kuterra leading the way in B.C.

With many of my colleagues from three different parties in the House, we had the chance to visit Kuterra. It has been in operation since 2013 and is fully owned by the 'Namgis First Nation on northern Vancouver Island. It is designed to produce 450 tonnes per year of antibiotic and hormone-free, non-GMO Atlantic salmon. All the water is recycled and cleaned every hour and 99% of that water is reused. The solid waste, which in traditional fish farms is dumped into the ocean, is filtered, captured, and composted in Kuterra's on-land farm. The ammonia in the water is converted to nitrate and can be used for aquaponics.

I cannot say enough how inspiring it was to go to this facility to see local people innovating, working together, creating local jobs, using local feed, and generating those on-the-ground results that can really inspire further success.

We have heard again and again from the proponents at Kuterra what a tremendous advantage British Columbia has. We already have fish farms, technicians, processing plants, everything to give us an advantage now over the United States. Yet the Danish company Langsand Laks is starting a 30,000 tonne on-land closed containment Atlantic salmon farm in Florida. Canada could get ahead of this sustainable, hi-tech wave by innovating now to protect wild salmon.

Private Members' Business

My colleague, the member of Parliament for Port Moody—Coquitlam, has such a strong record of standing up for wild salmon. He has flown across Georgia Strait, across the Salish Sea, and down the Fraser River. He has been a fantastic proponent and advocate, along with NGOs like the Georgia Strait Alliance. His bill before us today would strengthen the Fisheries Act by requiring west coast salmon farms to move from open-net harmful pens to safe closed containment systems within five years.

It would require the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard to plan the transition of the salmon farming industry on the west coast to closed containment in a way that moves those jobs that support the local economy. It is a win-win for the environment and local employment.

While 150 first nation bands oppose open-net salmon farms, there is tremendous support for this on-land salmon farm bill. The Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs, the First Nations Fisheries Alliance, the Canadian Wildlife Federation, the B.C. Wildlife Federation, and hundreds of others are in support. Moreover, almost 1,200 of my constituents have written to me to say that they want to see Parliament support the bill.

I will end with a plea to Parliament to recognize the sacred duty we have, the responsibility we have, to make things right for both the wild economy and local jobs. We can support a just transition to on-land closed containment salmon farms in B.C., proving that Canada can innovate, create jobs, protect wild salmon, and protect B.C.'s coastal economy.

● (1345)

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my riding of Kootenay—Columbia is located in the Rocky Mountains. For 10 years I was manager of visitor services with provincial parks for the Lower Mainland and Vancouver Island and I know how important a healthy wild salmon population is to the economy, the environment, and, indeed the way of life that people enjoy on the coast.

I also spent a bit of time as a teacher and I know that, apparently, people need to hear things at least three times before they really start to remember and understand them, so some of the facts that members will hear today they will have heard once or twice, but for probably a third time as well.

I am pleased to rise in the House today to support my NDP colleague from Port Moody—Coquitlam and his private member's bill, Bill C-228. I want to thank the member for his many years of work as a champion for west coast wild salmon, the oceans, and coastal communities. I was proud to run under the 2015 federal NDP platform that included a commitment to transitioning salmon farms to closed containment and it is my sincere hope that the members of the House will take action to support what is clearly science-based policy and protect this important resource.

Wild salmon play a vital ecological, cultural, and economic role on Canada's west coast. They feed species at risk, such as orca whales, eagles, bears, and other large mammals, and carry essential nutrients deep into coastal forests during their spawning cycles up rivers and creeks. Wild salmon is an important food source for coastal communities and an integral part of west coast first nations' economy, diet, and culture.

West coast wild salmon is a key economic driver in the region, supporting a \$102-million commercial fishery, a \$326-million recreational fishery, and over 9,000 family-supporting jobs in coastal and first nations communities. Wild salmon is also an important contributor to the \$783-million west coast wilderness tourism industry, which employs 26,000 people full time and roughly 40,000 people in total.

Coastal communities, cultural traditions, and complex ecosystems depend on a healthy west coast wild salmon population. Unfortunately, west coast wild salmon are under threat from sea lice, pollutants, and diseases coming from open net-cage fish farms. In British Columbia, the Fraser River salmon run historically topped over 100 million fish. Now, a run of 20 million to 30 million is considered exceptional. In 2009, only 1.4 million Fraser River sockeye returned to spawn. The NDP was a consistent supporter of the resulting judicial inquiry and of the important recommendations that came out of the Cohen commission.

It is important to note, though, that the devastating downward trend in our wild salmon population has continued, with indicators showing this year's salmon run to be just as low as the one that triggered the inquiry in 2009. Who is the major culprit? Open net fish farms have spread diseases and parasites to wild salmon populations; damaged ecosystems with feces and waste feed; and can kill whales, two in the last three weeks tangled in nets, and other marine mammals. Escaped farm salmon continue to end up in the wild population, further contributing to these problems.

Earlier this year, Dr. Kristi Miller of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans confirmed the presence of heart and skeletal muscle inflammation, or HSMI for short, in salmon samples collected from a B.C. fish farm located on the Johnstone Strait. The presence of this deadly salmon disease further raises the alarm that action must be taken.

Open net farms are located on essential wild salmon migration routes, including the Discovery Islands. If HSMI disease were to spread to wild salmon, already under threat from other diseases, including sea lice, the impact on the salmon population could be catastrophic. The Cohen commission recommended that the federal government apply the precautionary principle in relation to protecting wild salmon. The implementation of this principle means that when science demonstrates the existence of more than a minimal risk to our wild salmon population, the government is required to take action to protect it.

● (1350)

The Liberal government has claimed to be committed to the precautionary principle and protecting the wild salmon economy, but rather than take action to encourage closed containment fish farms, even in light of the overwhelming evidence pointing to the harms that they cause, the federal government has extended the duration of open net salmon farm licences from one year to six years.

Private Members' Business

The government also continues to allow diseased salmon to be transferred into farms on the west coast. At the same time, the Liberals have further allowed the destruction of wild salmon habitat by approving Site C hydro dam and Pacific NorthWest liquid natural gas developments.

Norway, Chile, and Scotland have all seen the negative impacts of open net farms on their wild salmon fisheries, leading to declining wild populations and collapses. We are now seeing the same potential problems in British Columbia. We need to learn from these examples and take action now to protect Canadian wild salmon.

Bill C-228 is part of the answer. This bill strengthens the Fisheries Act by requiring west coast fish farms to transition from open net pens to safe closed containment systems within five years. It also requires the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard to develop, table, and implement a plan to facilitate the transition of the west coast salmon farming industry to closed containment—and this does need to be a transition—within 18 months of the bill receiving royal assent.

This is sound, science-based policy that has received widespread support from stakeholders. Professor Rick Routledge of Simon Fraser University has said, “the scientific evidence that has emerged over the past several years clearly shows that aquaculture-related parasites and viruses pose far more than minimal risk to Fraser sockeye, and to other wild Pacific salmon more generally.” He goes on to say, “The only way that I can see to safeguard this globally significant natural treasure from this very real threat is to require a rapid transition to closed containment, land-based facilities.”

Closed containment farming systems place a barrier between wild and farmed salmon, effectively eliminating some of the most negative impacts of open net salmon farming, and significantly reducing others. A transition to closed containment technology has many benefits for the wild salmon economy, including removing the threat of disease and parasites, reducing the need for antibiotics and chemical treatments in fish farming, allowing farmed salmon to grow to market weight faster, and commanding a premium price for an environmentally sustainable product, providing greater operational control to minimize investment risk and losses, and ultimately protecting our marine ecosystems.

These systems are already finding success in salmon production across Canada, led by Kuterra in B.C., and Sustainable Blue in Nova Scotia. There are also more than 70 licensed closed containment fin fish farms in British Columbia growing salmon, tilapia, crayfish, and trout.

As Aaron Hill of the Watershed Watch Salmon Society notes, “Closed containment aquaculture protects wild salmon from harmful viruses and parasites that can be spread by salmon farms. We shouldn't have to trade off the health of our wild salmon for aquaculture jobs, and if Bill C-228 passes, we won't have to. Moving to closed containment salmon farming is a no-brainer.”

I could not agree more. We can protect our environment and our jobs with this safe, reliable, proven technology. Bill C-228 provides us with a historic opportunity to protect wild salmon and the wild salmon economy. As our nation's federal representatives, we in this

House have a responsibility to pursue a long-term vision for Canada's natural heritage.

As Andrew Wright of The Willow Grove Foundation has said, “Closed containment holds the promise of creating a diversified enduring rural economy with no environmental impacts. It allows wild and farmed salmon economies and ecosystems to thrive.”

Canada can become a world leader in closed containment technology, providing jobs for first nations and our rural and coastal communities, while also taking a science-based approach to protecting our environment. I strongly urge all members of this House to support Bill C-228, and to protect the national treasure that is wild salmon for generations to come.

• (1355)

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Port Moody—Coquitlam for bringing this important bill to this place. I am very happy to speak to it and express my strong support for it.

As others have mentioned, the bill proposes to move open-net salmon aquaculture pens to safe, closed containment systems over a five-year period. This will have significant beneficial impacts on the survival of west coast salmon and Pacific ecosystems in general.

The five species of Pacific salmon are a keystone of aquatic ecosystems in British Columbia. Salmon mature in the open Pacific then migrate hundreds of kilometres inland to spawn.

I want to mention, even though it has already been mentioned today, that the sponsor of this bill has swum the length of the Fraser River twice, 1,400 kilometres each time. He knows what the salmon have to go through. Admittedly, he has only done it downstream, so he has not fought the currents all the way. However, it is still an impressive feat and a real testament to his efforts to save wild salmon.

As the salmon fight those currents, they are bringing rich nutrients from the ocean into the interior rivers, lakes, and forests. One simply has to witness the spectacle of wildlife around a salmon spawning ground to understand the significance of this. Hundreds, sometimes thousands, of bald eagles gather at the spawning sites to feast on the spent spawners, moving from river to river as the different spawning events unfold throughout the summer, fall, and winter.

These eagles come from all over western North America, from Arizona, Colorado, Montana, Alberta, and Northwest Territories. The salmon runs are an essential part of their winter survival, as well as the survival of a myriad of other species, including bear, waterfowl, and others that rely on salmon, including the orcas that feed on them as they come back out of the ocean through the narrows of Johnstone Strait and other places on the coast.

Private Members' Business

The young salmon swim downstream to the Pacific, usually spending time in the rich estuaries of the river mouths, which act as nurseries. Estuaries in B.C. have been prime locations for industrial activity: port facilities on the tidal flats of the Fraser estuary, logsorts up and down the coast, and recently a new proposal for an LNG port on one of the most important eelgrass beds at the mouth of the Skeena.

First nations have also relied on salmon for millennia. For many indigenous communities across British Columbia and Yukon, salmon are the centrepiece of their food supply throughout the year, and have always been central to their culture. They were an abundant, predictable, and easily preserved resource.

In my riding, first nations have travelled each year to significant concentration sites, such as Okanagan Falls and south of the border at Kettle Falls. In the Okanagan Nation, or *Syilx* culture, salmon, or *Niytikw*, is one of the four food chiefs, along with *Skimxist*, bear; *Speethum*, bitterroot; and *Seeya*, Saskatoon berry.

However, salmon populations have suffered greatly over the past century. Heavy fishing in the early 1900s significantly reduced many stocks. Clear-cut logging along streams degraded spawning habitat. Hydroelectric dams have wiped out 20 salmon stocks in British Columbia, most of them on the Columbia River. Climate change threatens to diminish stocks further, as spring freshets come earlier and weaker, and summer droughts become longer, drier, and hotter. Salmon die in warm, oxygen-poor waters.

When I was young, there were few salmon that returned each year to the Okanagan River to spawn. Although the Okanagan was one of the last two viable sockeye runs in the Columbia River system, only about 5,000 fish came back each fall. Chinook salmon were even more endangered. One population estimate of the Okanagan spawning population from about a decade ago was only seven individuals.

Some years ago, serious efforts began to restore the sockeye populations of the Okanagan. In the last decade, these efforts have been spearheaded by the Okanagan Nation Alliance. Through its efforts to rebuild the spawning channels of the Okanagan River, sockeye now number in the hundreds of thousands in good years.

Last year, a half million sockeye entered the Columbia destined for the Okanagan, all but 10,000 died in the warm-water pools below the 11 dams they had to deal with on their way upstream. This year was cooler and wetter, and the return was good.

● (1400)

It is clear that salmon populations on the Pacific coast of Canada face a multitude of challenges, and any addition to these cumulative stressors could tip populations over the edge, sending them into decline and local extinction.

Bill C-228 would remove one of those challenges, a significant one. We know that open-net salmon farms have impacts on wild salmon populations, through disease, parasites, pollution, and escapement. Remember, these are Atlantic salmon in these pens and when they escape and try to spawn in the local rivers, it is a serious problem for wild salmon populations. We know that the aquatic ecosystems of British Columbia and much of the terrestrial ecosystems around spawning rivers are being degraded because of

this situation. We know there is a problem, and we know the answer. We know what we have to do. We simply have to have the political will to fix the problem.

In the past, when we have faced similar situations, we have been successful. In the 1960s and 1970s, we discovered that DDT was causing dramatic declines in the populations of birds of prey around the world. Eagles and falcons were disappearing. We knew the cause. It was DDT, so we banned that pesticide, even though it was costly in the short term for the agricultural industry. I know that impact. I grew up on a small apple orchard and saw what my father had to do in buying new equipment to deal with the new pesticides that replaced DDT. However, we fixed the problem, and have seen eagle and falcon populations rebound in spectacular fashion over the past 40 years. The agriculture industry has not only survived but has flourished.

We can do the same for wild salmon. The bill calls for a shift from open-net salmon farms to closed containment systems. That is the right thing to do. We can still have a successful salmon farming industry on the Pacific coast, one that is based on sound environmental principles, and one that could command higher prices for its product because of those principles. Canada can become a world leader in closed containment systems as the world makes this shift.

I urge every member of the House to support Bill C-228 and save our wild salmon.

● (1405)

Mr. Fin Donnelly (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government got a couple of things wrong in its response to my bill, so I am happy to correct the record and give members something to think about before the vote.

The parliamentary secretary said that we have no evidence that the environment is sacrificed to pursue the economic development of British Columbia's aquaculture industry. That is simply not true. Earlier this year, the government's own departmental scientists confirmed the existence of heart and skeletal muscle inflammation, HSMI, in farmed salmon. The Cohen Commission and numerous studies, including a study published in October in *Marine Policy*, concluded that there is a risk to wild salmon due to the transfer of sea lice and disease.

Private Members' Business

The government also said that closed containment is unproved technology. Again, this is not the case. In B.C., Kuterra, owned by the 'Namgis First Nation, produces 400 tons of closed containment salmon each year, which is antibiotic-free, hormone-free, and non-GMO. In Nova Scotia, Sustainable Blue will produce 100 tons of closed containment salmon this year and up to 150 tons or more next year. In Washington State, Domsea Farms has been producing land-based freshwater coho salmon for 37 years. These salmon are now available in 124 Overwaitea stores throughout western Canada. In Denmark, Danish Salmon has closed containment facilities capable of producing 2,000 tons of salmon annually, and Langsand Laks is supplying customers with weekly harvests year round and is planning a 30,000-ton closed containment salmon south of Miami in Florida.

The parliamentary secretary said he agrees with the spirit and intent of my bill, which is good news. However, it is not good enough. If the government is serious about protecting west coast wild salmon and respecting Justice Cohen's concerns and recommendations, then the Liberals should vote yes to Bill C-228.

Study after study for more than 15 years has come to the same conclusion.

In 2001, the Leggatt Inquiry into salmon farming in B.C. concluded:

Removing the net cages from B.C. waters and replacing them with a closed-loop containment system which prevents waste from being discharged into the environment will resolve most of these problems.

The industry has invested substantially in net-cage technology and must be given time to convert its operations. But we feel that this process must begin immediately and that conversion be subject to a regulated time-table. Farms in salmon migration routes or other sensitive areas should be converted to closed containment systems as a first priority and all salmon farms should be converted within three years.

That was 15 years ago.

In 2003, the report of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans recommended that the department prohibit the development of finfish aquaculture near or in major salmon-bearing rivers. The report went on to recommend that the department work with industry to develop closed-loop aquaculture systems for finfish aquaculture and that this be the only system permitted in Canada. This was 13 years ago.

The B.C. legislative Special Committee on Sustainable Aquaculture, in 2005 to 2007, recommended that a rapid transition to ocean-based closed containment begin immediately and that industry transition to this technology within the subsequent two years. The report also said:

It is our expectation that ocean-based closed containment technologies developed in BC will be licensed and sold around the world as consumers demand more sustainable aquaculture practices. This sustainable solution includes a barrier between farmed fish and the marine environment.

That was almost a decade ago.

Finally, the Cohen Commission, in the most comprehensive review of Pacific salmon management in Canada, concluded:

...the potential harm posed to Fraser River sockeye salmon from salmon farms is serious or irreversible. Disease transfer occurs between wild and farmed fish, and I am satisfied that salmon farms along the sockeye migration route have the potential to introduce exotic diseases and to exacerbate endemic diseases that could have a negative impact on Fraser River sockeye.

This is science-based, commercially viable, common-sense legislation that is long overdue.

● (1410)

I hope I can count on all members of the House to do the right thing and vote in favour of Bill C-228. Let us move this legislation to committee so we can look at ways to implement the solution that study after study has recommended but Canada has failed to enact.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): 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.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Pursuant to order made on Thursday, December 1, the recorded division stands deferred until Tuesday, December 6, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

It now being 2:12 p.m. the House stands adjourned until next Monday at 11 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 2:12 p.m.)

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